THE METAPHYSICAL
IN
EMILY DICKINSON'S POETRY

by

Mary Charlotte Halpin

AM
1947
ha

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
LIBRARY

Gift of the Author

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Abstract

THE METAPHYSICAL IN EMILY DICKINSON'S POETRY

by

Mary Charlotte Halpin

(B. S., Worcester State Teachers College, 1935)

Submitted In Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

1947

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
LIBRARY

The Metaphysical in Emily Dickinson's Poetry

Since the publication of the first volume of poems by Emily Dickinson in 1890, there have been numerous references to the metaphysical quality of her poetry and to the marked resemblance of her poetry to that of the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century. Analysis of her work reveals that her love poems and those that treat of the problems of time and eternity are metaphysical in style and in content.

> "Metaphysical poetry, in the full sense of the term, is a poetry which . . . has been inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe and the role assigned to the human spirit in the great drama of existence."[1]

Great metaphysical poetry is universal in concept, but that of the seventeenth century was intensely personal, expressed with passionate intensity subjected to the restraint of an intellectual imagery markedly different from the Elizabethan poetry still popular at the time. Metaphysical poetry had two distinguishing characteristics: it was an extremely personal expression of the poet's meditationa on man and his relationship to God and eternity; and it was a revolt against the strained conceits and stereotyped expressions of Elizabethan poetry. The metaphysical poet rejected the stereotyped verse of the late Elizabethans and wrote in simple, direct

---

[1] Grierson, Herbert J. C., editor, Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century, fourth edition, (London: Oxford At The Clarendon Press, 1936), p. i.

language, wrenching conventional metrical patterns to secure more forceful presentation of his ideas. He interpreted involved and intellectual reflections in terms of commonplace experience, drawing his imagery from every possible source, no matter how trivial. At times his poetry was simple, even crude; at others it was erudite and involved, but in spite of the exterior roughness resulting from over-zealous experimentation, the metaphysical poets composed poetry that was challenging, vibrant, thought-inspiring--alive.

Two hundred years later Emily Dickinson, in self-imposed seclusion, also meditated on the significance of cosmos and on her relationship to God and Eternity. How well she was acquainted with metaphysical poetry is unknown, but that she had more than a casual knowledge is doubtful. One thing is certain, however, and that is that the poetry that she wrote in solitude and treasured in secret is essentially metaphysical in character.

Emily Dickinson's efforts to penetrate the tenuous opacity that prevents man from comprehending the infinite are expressed in poetry that is intuitive rather than deeply philosophical, the result of keen observation and analysis of her own thoughts and emotions, not of scholarly research. Because of the fascination the problem held for her, there is a passionate intensity underlying the apparently impersonal scrutiny, an intensity which breaks through the metrical pattern

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2016 with funding from
Boston Library Consortium Member Libraries

https://archive.org/details/metaphysicalinem00halp

of the deeply emotional love poetry and the more personal of the poems of death and immortality, but which is usually subjected to the restraint imposed by a more intellectual expression of her feelings.

In her preoccupation with these tantalizing and elusive problems, she examined them from every possible angle, scrutinizing each phase with meticulous care, and recording her observations in simple, terse language, stripped of extraneous details. The infinite she interpreted in terms of the finite; the complex, by analogy with familiar and often homely experiences; the intangible, in terms of the tangible.

Her philosophy was based upon the conviction that opposites enhance instead of destroy one another and that indirect methods are more effective than direct. The effectiveness of development through contrast is apparent in every phase of her poetry: content, style, and meter.

Like the metaphysical poets she chose to use the simple expressive idiom of colloquial speech, drawing her imagery from the incidents of daily life. Such homely sources enabled her to record her observations in language whose very simplicity was in dramatic contrast to the complexity and magnitude of the ideas expressed.

In all phases of her work the outstanding characteristic is the use of metaphor, both in laconic, clear-cut definition and in ingenious elaboration of an image. To interpret

the complex and apparently contradictory phenomena of life and eternity, she found paradox to be the most effective instrument whether used in brief, epigrammatic form or as the basis of intellectual and argumentative thought. In the development of argument she used all the rhetorical devices characteristic of metaphysical argument: parallelism, paradox, analogy antithesis, and development through negative statement. To secure greater emphasis and to increase the dramatic impact of the argument, images were multiplied in swift and dramatic sequence. Dramatic effects were also procured by personification of abstract ideas and by abrupt, challenging introductions and implications of action which suggested the dramatic background.

The metaphysical poets had discovered earlier that the short line and iambic foot of the ballad stanza were most easily adapted to reproduce the inflections of ordinary speech rhythms. Emily Dickinson used this form extensively, occasionally using arrangements with shorter lines. More rarely she used the triplet and the sestet, and sometimes longer stanzas. On the whole her preference was for the most compact forms. Under stress of emotion she disregarded metrical form entirely.

To avoid the monotony resulting from too strict adherence to the metrical pattern, she varied the form by conventional methods: substituting a trochee for an iamb, shortening or lengthening a line unexpectedly, adding a syllable here

and omitting one there. The result was a lyrical intensity and dramatic quality all the more striking because of their unexpectedness. At other times the sudden break in meter or unexpected reversal of the pattern throws into prominence an element that might otherwise have been disregarded.

The challenging effects produced by unconventional disturbance of the metrical pattern were further emphasized by an even more unconventional use of rhyme. The exact rhyme insisted upon by nineteenth century poets is present in the poetry of Emily Dickinson, but she also uses assonance and suspended rhyme extensively, or ignores it completely if it interferes with the expression of thought. Sometimes the rhyme is subtly suggested so that its omission is not noted; at others the discordant note serves to shock one into an awareness of the vital import of the idea thus isolated.

In the expression of the thoughts and emotions aroused by contemplation of the infinite, and in the technique used to crystallize her observations into a form that is thought-provoking, vital, challenging and alive, Emily Dickinson's poetry is thoroughly metaphysical, but her metaphysics is expressed in an idiom that is essentially and perennially that of New England.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE METAPHYSICAL IN EMILY DICKINSON'S POETRY

by

Mary Charlotte Belpin

(B. S., Worcester State Teachers College, 1935)

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

1947

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE METAPHYSICAL IN EMILY DICKINSON'S POETRY

by

Mary Charlotte Halpin

(B. S., Worcester State Teachers College, 1935)

Submitted In Partial Fulfilment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

1947

AM 1947
ha

Approved
by

First Reader........George M. Sneath........
Professor of English Literature

Second Reader........Donald J. Winslow........
Professor of English Literature

"This was a Poet--it is that
Distills amazing sense
From ordinary meanings,
And attar so immense
From the familiar species
That perished by the door,
We wonder it was not ourselves
Arrested it before."

(221, x)

"This was a Poet--it is that
Distills amazing sense
From ordinary meanings,
And attars so immense
From the familiar species
That perished by the door,
We wonder it was not ourselves
Arrested it before."

(281, x)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

I. The problem and explanation of metaphysical poetry 1
  The problem 1
    Statement of the problem 1
    Importance of the study 1
  History of metaphysical references 2
  Direct influence of metaphysical poets on the work of Emily Dickinson 5
  Definition of metaphysical poetry 7
    Broad definition 7
    Characteristics of metaphysical poetry of the seventeenth century 7
  Organization of thesis 10
    Analysis of content of poems of love, death, and immortality 10
    Analysis of form 11
      Style 11
      Meter and rhyme 11

PART TWO

ANALYSIS OF CONTENT OF POEMS

II. "A Diagram of Rapture"--analysis of love poems . . 12
  Arrangement of poems by editors 12
  Sources 13
  Discussion of poems 14
    Early love poems 14
    Poems of renunciation 21
    Poems of pain 26
    Poems of resignation 31
  Conclusions 40
    Passionate intensity 40
    Intellectual analysis 43
    Range of mood 44
    Comparison with metaphysical poetry 44

III. "Conclusion is the Course of All"--analysis of poems of death 46
  Interest in death of friends and relatives . . . 46
  Discussion of poems 48
    Direct observation of actual death and burial scenes 48
    Imaginative conceptions and dramatizations of death 56
    Reflections on death and immortality 59
  Conclusions 66
    Passionate intensity 66
    Intellectual analysis 67
    Range of mood 68
    Comparison with metaphysical poetry 70

IV. "The Colossal Substance of Immortality"--analysis of poems of time and eternity 71
  Discussion of poems 71
    Glimpses of eternity 71
    Philosophy of compensation 75
    Proof of immortality 77
    Personal relationship to God 80
    Skepticism 81
    Concept of eternity 82
  Conclusions 87
    Passionate intensity 87
    Intellectual analysis of emotions 88
    Range of mood 89
    Comparison with metaphysical poetry 90

PART THREE

ANALYSIS OF FORM

V. "Bright Orthography"--the style of Emily Dickinson's poetry 92
  Sources of imagery 93
  Style 102
    Metaphor 102
      Definition 102
      Analysis of emotion 103
      Elaboration of metaphor 105
    Paradox 107
    Rhetoric 108
    Epigrams 109

- Dramatic effects 111
  - Abrupt introduction 111
  - Personification 111
- Argument 113
- Parallelism 115
- Negative statements 116
- Multiplications of images 118

Conclusions 120
- Sources of imagery 120
- Metaphor 121
- Paradox 122
- Rhetoric 122
- Epigram 122
- Dramatic effects 123
- Argument 123
- Multiplication of images 124

VI. "The Bells Whose Jingling Cooled My Tramp"--meter and rhyme in Emily Dickinson's poetry 125

Contemporary criticism of Emily Dickinson's style 125

Metrical patterns 127
- Stanzaic forms 127
  - Variations of conventional forms 131
  - Imitation of normal speech rhythms 132
  - Run-on lines and stanzas 133
  - Ellipsis 134
- Broken metrical patterns 135
- Repetition of vowel and consonant sounds . . . 138

Rhyme schemes 139
- Assonance 140
- Suspended rhyme 140
- Omission of rhyme 141

Purpose of exterior roughness 143

Conclusions 144
- Stanzaic forms 144
- Rhythm of colloquial speech 145
- Broken metrical patterns 145
- Echoes of sounds 146
- Rhyme schemes 146

PART IV

CONCLUSION

VII. CONCLUSION 148

Problems considered by Emily Dickinson 148

Passionate intensity 148
Intellectual analysis of emotion 149
Range of mood 150
Style 151
Metrical patterns 152
Rhyme schemes 153

VIII. Bibliography 154

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND EXPLANATION OF METAPHYSICAL POETRY

Since the publication of the first group of poems of Emily Dickinson in 1890, writers have compared her work to that of the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century, particularly that of Donne, Herbert, and Vaughan, and to that of William Blake in the nineteenth century.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It is the purpose of this study to show (1) that Emily Dickinson has recorded and analyzed her emotions relative to love, death, immortality, and other problems which perplex mankind with the same passionate intensity and thoughtful analysis of the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century, (2) that her poetry is similar to theirs in imagery and style, and (3) that she has likewise ignored the acknowledged rules governing the use of rhyme and meter in order to produce a more effective presentation of her thoughts.

Importance of the study. Numerous references have been made to the metaphysical qualities of Emily Dickinson's poetry but no detailed study has yet been made to prove that these qualities are true of the bulk of her poetry. In this study an attempt has been made to examine the poems in detail,

particularly those grouped in the sections entitled "Life", "Love", "Time and Eternity", and "Further Poems" in the Poems of Emily Dickinson,[1] and "The Infinite Aurora", "The White Exploit", "Vital Light", "That Campaign Inscrutable", and "An Ablative Estate" in Bolts of Melody.[2]

II. HISTORY OF METAPHYSICAL REFERENCES

In the preface of the first volume of poems by Emily Dickinson, Thomas Wentworth Higginson stated that "The thoughtful reader will find in these pages a quality more suggestive of the poetry of William Blake than anything to be found elsewhere."[3] From that time to the present critics have commented upon the decided resemblance of her poems to those of the metaphysical poets.

Shortly after the appearance of Poems, Second Series in 1891, Henry P. Schauffer made the following comment: "In a most remarkable way, she goes on further to define power, rivaling the most able of metaphysicians in clearness and

---

[1] Martha Dickinson Bianchi and Alfred Leete Hampson, editors, Poems by Emily Dickinson, tenth edition, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1946), pp. 1-61, 125-219 and 275-374.

[2] Mabel Loomis Todd and Millicent Todd Bingham, editors, Bolts of Melody, third edition, (New York: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1945), pp. 137-294.

[3] Mabel Loomis Todd and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, editors, Poems by Emily Dickinson, (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1890), Preface, p. v.

comprehensiveness of definition."[1]

Upon the publication of a fourth volume of verse, The Single Hound, in 1914, critics noted further likenesses to the metaphysicians, and Marsden Hartley remarked, "It was a charm in itself, not like any other genius then or now, or in the time before her, having perhaps a little of relationship to the crystal clearness of Crashaw-- like Vaughan and Donne maybe in respect to their lyrical fervor and moral earnestness."[2]

In a review of the so-called Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson, published in 1924, Conrad Aiken said, "To see her at her best and most characteristic and most profound, one must turn to the remarkable range of metaphysical speculation and ironic introspection which is displayed in those sections of her posthumous books which her editors have captioned 'Life', and 'Time and Eternity'."[3]

Further Poems of Emily Dickinson, appearing in 1929, evoked still greater recognition of the metaphysical quality inherent in her verse. Theodore Spencer notes "the same development of thought through imagery, the same use of meter

---

[1] Henry P. Schauffer, The Second Series of Emily Dickinson's Poems. Amherst Literary Monthly, 6:177, November, 1891.

[2] Marsden Hartley, "Emily Dickinson", The Dial, 65:95, August 15, 1918.

[3] Conrad Aiken, "Emily Dickinson", The Dial, 76:306, April, 1924.

in a structural, not merely an ornamental, manner which we associate with metaphysical verse . . . She is more stark than the poets of the seventeenth century, all extraneous luxuriance is stripped away . . . But she achieves, as the result of this bareness, an epigrammatic quality which her seventeenth century prototypes frequently lack."[1]

Contemporary criticism concentrates more upon likenesses in intensity of thought rather than in form. Sydney McLean says, "Emily Dickinson, indeed, comes closest to the seventeenth century, not in the strained conceits of the metaphysical poets, but in their contemplation of cosmos."[2]

Louis Untermeyer re-emphasizes the original reference to Blake when he notes that "the essential quality (is) a Blake-like purity combined with a most un-Puritan pertness."[3] But, he adds, "She is Blake one moment, Vaughan the next, then Jonathan Edwards, and herself all the time."[4]

George Frisbie Whicher also stresses the fact that "Among the English poets Blake is her only rival in the

---

[1] Theodore Spencer, "Further Poems of Emily Dickinson", New England Quarterly, 2:499, July, 1929.

[2] Sydney R. McLean, "Emily Dickinson", Mount Holyoke Alumnae Quarterly, 19:222, February, 1936.

[3] Louis Untermeyer, editor, Modern American Poetry, sixth revised edition, (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1942), p. 79.

[4] Ibid., p. 81.

faculty of making a little count for much (but) Emily Dickinson. . . never lets us forget the world of here and now."[1]

III. DIRECT INFLUENCE OF THE METAPHYSICAL POETS ON THE WORK OF EMILY DICKINSON

In spite of the close parallels in thought and form between the work of Emily Dickinson and that of her seventeenth century predecessors, there is very little evidence to indicate that she was directly influenced by the work of any of these poets or even that she was familiar with their work, although as Mr. Whicher points out, "Any allusions from her to the religious poets of the seventeenth century would be of particular interest because of the close parallel between her work and that of Donne, Herbert, and Vaughan."[2]

The only direct reference which she makes is in a letter to Colonel Higginson in the summer of 1880 in which she wrote, " 'Twas noting some such scene made _Vaughan_ humbly say,

'My days that are at best but dim and hoary.'

I think it was Vaughan."[3]

Mr. Whicher notes that this was a line "which she

---

[1] George Frisbie Whicher, _This Was A Poet_, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), p. 291.

[2] _Ibid_., p. 210.

[3] Martha Dickinson Bianchi, _The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson_, (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1924), p.325.

might easily have read in Palgrave."[1] He also states that Vaughan's name was misspelled in the original letter and that her final comment would seem to indicate that she was not certain of her source.

The only other evidence that indicates any actual acquaintance with metaphysical poetry is Poem 232 which appeared in the first three editions of Bolts of Melody. Arthur N. Stunz discovered that these stanzas were not the work of Emily Dickinson but were "a verbatim copy of Stanzas 2 and 3 of George Herbert's Mattens."[2]

> "My God, what is a heart,
> Silver, or gold, or precious stone,
> Or star, or rainbow, or a part
> Of all these things--or all of them in one?
>
> My God, what is a heart,
> That thou shouldst it so eye and woo,
> Pouring upon it all thy art
> As if that thou hadst nothing else to do!"[3]

The only conclusion to be safely drawn from this evidence is that Emily Dickinson liked the lines well enough to copy them, but it is hardly conclusive evidence that she was familiar with, or strongly influenced by, the metaphysical

---

[1] Whicher, op. cit., p. 210.

[2] Arthur N. Stunz, "Bolts of Melody", (Letter from a contributor), The Saturday Review of Literature, 28:19, August 18, 1945.

[3] Todd and Bingham, op. cit., p. 125. Cf. post. Coffin, Robert P. Tristram and Alexander Witherspoon, editors, Seventeenth Century Prose and Poetry, (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1946), p. 111.

poets individually or as a group. It is not the purpose of this paper to prove that Emily Dickinson was influenced directly by these poets but rather to show that in choice and treatment of subject, in imagery, and in technique, her work parallels that of the seventeenth century poets.

IV. DEFINITION OF METAPHYSICAL POETRY

Broad definition. "Metaphysical poetry, in the full sense of the term, is a poetry which like that of the *Divina Commedia*, the *De Rerum Natura*, perhaps Goethe's *Faust*, has been inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe and the role assigned to the human spirit in the great drama of existence."[1]

Application to metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century. The metaphysical poet of the seventeenth century was indeed "inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe and the role assigned to the human spirit" therein, but his was an intensely personal interpretation of the relationship between man and God, of life and death and immortality, not the universal concept of a Dante.

The Renaissance, already flourishing on the Continent, had flowered late in England but with a brilliance unequalled

---

[1] Herbert J. C. Grierson, editor, *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century*, fourth edition, (London: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1936), p. 244.

since. Arts and letters were encouraged, and men sought to create a literature purely English in thought and expression. Explorers penetrated little-known corners of the globe and returned with strange and wonderful tales. Increased interest in science resulted in a more careful examination and analysis of the mysteries of the universe. It was a period of exhilaration and excitement, but underneath the gaiety and the brilliance festered the uncertainty and skepticism aroused by the Reformation. All of this is reflected in the passionate intensity and careful analysis of the metaphysical poet.

The metaphysician rebelled against the conventional and elaborate conceits of the Elizabethans and tried to express himself in simple, unconventional and colloquial English, sublimating form and content to forceful expression of thought and emotion. He wrote about those subjects which have always been of most concern to man--life and love, death and immortality--analyzing them thoughtfully, not with the cold objectivity of the scientist, but with the emotional warmth with which man considers that which is the very essence of Being. Every conceivable aspect of man's relationship to God and to his fellow man was included in what Herbert Read designates as "emotional apprehension of thought."[1]

---

[1] William Flint Thrall and Addison Hubbard, A Handbook To Literature, (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1936), p. 251.

In order to develop these philosophical and speculative aspects of the human mind, the metaphysical poet drew comparisons between things and thoughts seemingly unrelated. He used paradox extensively in his arguments, and his work is marked, and often marred, by use of hyperbole and antithesis. In spite of his intention to simulate spoken English, his conceits are often ingenious and subtle, sometimes simple but frequently erudite, and occasionally so far-fetched and extravagant as to obscure the thought completely. His images are drawn from all phases of life: business, science, navigation, sports, town and court.

The new school also revolted against conventional forms and metrical patterns as well as against choice of subject and poetic diction. It tried to approximate the rhythm of everyday speech in its meter, even though the sense ran on from one line or stanza to the next, breaking the metrical pattern. These individual irregularities of line and short, sharp phrases which broke the smoothness of the verse were synthesized into an effective and harmonious whole.

To secure the soaring feeling at which he aimed more easily, the poet found the shorter line of the song more effective than the longer one of the sonnet. As a result, he used the ballad stanza or the longer measure of the couplet in preference to other forms. The result was a short but vivid poem often with a dramatic turn.

Men's thoughts of life and eternity are rarely dispassionate and calmly objective but rather dynamic and passionate. The metaphysical poet, therefore, seeks to express emotional thought, the essence of which is a "passionate ratiocination,"[1] a keen psychological analysis of the emotions, particularly those concerned with love and death. It is a record and an analysis of various moods expressed in an intellectual but imaginative manner. It is this emphasis upon emotion based on reason which gives an intensity and fire to this poetry which is lacking in more conventionalized verse.

V. ORGANIZATION

In order to compare the poetry of Emily Dickinson with that of the metaphysical poets, this paper has been divided into two major sections. The first discusses the metaphysical characteristics of the content; the second, of the form.

The first section has been subdivided into three parts. The first considers those poems which pertain to love; the second, to death; and the third, to time and eternity. In each section the poems have been examined from the point of view of passionate intensity, intellectual analysis of emotion, and variety of moods expressed. Comparisons have been made between specific poems of Emily Dickinson and those of Donne, Herbert, and other metaphysical poets.

---

[1] Grierson, _op_. _cit_., p. xxxv.

The section on form has been subdivided into two parts, the first discussing style, the second mechanics. In the first, her imagery and use of paradox, epigram and metaphor have been compared to that of the metaphysical poets. In the second, metrical patterns and rhyme schemes have been examined from the traditional and from the metaphysical point of view.

CHAPTER II

"A DIAGRAM OF RAPTURE"

There has been much discussion as to the identity of Emily Dickinson's lover. At least two plausible theories have been evolved: one by Genevieve Taggard; the other by Josephine Pollitt. Others have denied the existence of an actual lover with equal conviction. It is not within the scope of this paper to speculate upon the presence or absence of an actual lover. Regardless of the controversy, one fact remains undisputed: Emily Dickinson has written a group of love poems of which Miss Taggard says:[1]

> "She found that the heart acted with diminishing values and she found a way of writing that would parallel the process; no one had ever before made such a bare graph. Only John Donne, two hundred years before, had suggested multitudinous possibilities in line after line of rapid sketch."

Unfortunately for the student, the poems of Emily Dickinson have not been arranged in chronological order. In *Poems By Emily Dickinson*[2] the love poems are grouped under the titles "Love", "The Single Hound", and "Additional Poems, Part Seven" (Section three), but others are scattered throughout the book. In *Bolts of Melody* they are grouped chronologi-

---

[1] Taggard, Genevieve, *The Life and Mind of Emily Dickinson*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), p. 232.

[2] Bianchi and Hampson, *op. cit.*

cally, for the most part, in the section called "The Infinite Aurora". In the following discussion, the poems are arranged in chronological order in so far as possible, but in the absence of detailed information, much of this arrangement obviously is based on conjecture.

To facilitate references to the originals, the quotations have been labeled as follows:

Poems By Emily Dickinson[1] are marked by page and number: Ex. (127, i).

Poems from Bolts of Melody[2] are followed by the initials BM and the number of the poem: Ex. (BM, 302).

Quotations from Metaphysical Poetry of the Seventeenth Century[3] have the initial G followed by the page: Ex. (G, 23).

. . . .

Throughout the poems and letters of Emily Dickinson the theme of love is omnipresent: love of family, love of friend, and love of betrothed. In a letter to Mrs. J. G. Holland in the late summer of 1856, just when it is assumed her own love affair seemed most likely of fulfilment, she wrote:

---

[1] Bianchi and Hampson, op. cit.

[2] Todd, Mabel Loomis and Millicent Todd Bingham, editors, Bolts of Melody, third edition, (New York: Harper Brothers, Publishers, 1945).

[3] Grierson, op. cit.

> " . . . Dear Mrs. Holland, I love, to-night--love you and Dr. Holland, and time and sense--and fading things, and things that do not fade.
>
> . . . .
>
> " . . . love me if you will, for I had rather be loved than to be called a king in earth, or a lord in Heaven."[1]

Like the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century Emily Dickinson has produced in her poems a record of every mood and an analysis of every change of emotion from joy to intense grief, from the ecstasy of realization that her love was returned to the anguish of renunciation and finally to resignation based on a hope of final reunion in heaven.

In her early poems intense joy is scarcely to be confined within the limits of her verse. Delirious triumph overflows in a series of rapturous exclamations which multiply in rapid succession.

"Mine by the right of the white election!
Mine by the royal seal!
Mine by the sign in the scarlet prison
Bars cannot conceal!

Mine, here in vision and in veto!
Mine, by the grave's repeal!
Titled, confirmed,--delirious charter!
Mine, while the ages steal!"
(127, i)

It was characteristic of Emily Dickinson, however, that she "would eat evanescence slowly."[2] It was in

---

[1] Bianchi, Martha Dickinson, The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson, (London: Johathan Cape Ltd., 1924), p. 200.

[2] Ibid., p. 201.

anticipation, not in fulfillment, that she experienced her greatest joy. Gain was ever satiety for her; even the ecstasy of love was to be accepted hesitantly.

"Come slowly, Eden!
Lips unused to thee,
Bashful, sip thy jasmines,
As the fainting bee,

Reaching late his flower,
Round the chamber hums,
Counts his nectars--enters,
And is lost in balms."
(136, xviii)

The personal emotion has been subtly absorbed in the simile of the bee, intensifying the experience while subjecting it to the restraint enforced by the imagery. While she uses her favorite illustration of the bee, it is noticeable that she has chosen the more exotic jasmine to indicate the esoteric quality of her love rather than the commonplace New England flowers.

In the first hesitant awareness of love reciprocated her poetry reflects every mood from shyness to exultation. "I thought the train would never come" (BM, 258) shows the impatience of the waiting sweetheart which the arrival of the lover drives into shyness although she

" . . . had taught my heart a hundred times
Precisely what to say--
Provoking lover, when you came
Its treatise flew away!"

The diffidence of young lovers is further portrayed in

"We talk in venture and in toss,
A kind of plummet strain,
Each sounding shyly just how deep
The other's foot had been."
(BM, 259)

With characteristic brevity she rapidly sketches the development of their love, telescoping the experience into a compact metaphor.

"We learned the whole of love,
The alphabet, the words,
A chapter, then the mighty book--
Then revelation closed."
(BM, 260)

This ability to summarize an intense emotional experience with a minimum of detail is all the more notable because of the simplicity of the imagery, or the complete absence of anything but the most economical language as shown in the following:

"He found my being, set it up,
Adjusted it to place,
Then carved his name upon it
And bade it to the east
. . . .
Be faithful in his absence
And he would come again."
(BM, 279)

Completely devoid of sensuous imagery, bare as New England granite, these passages nevertheless record the elements of her experience and yet manage to convey the essence of her feeling.

New England reserve, however, occasionally dissolves into a spontaneous outburst of incredible rapture.

"'Tis this invites, appals, endows,
Flits, glimmers, proves, dissolves,
Returns, suggests, convicts, enchants--
Then flings in Paradise'."
(322, cxxxii)

This swift succession of verbs, antithetical yet apt, crystallizes the sensations of the lover as no detailed description could. It reproduces the rapid flux and reflux of emotion and achieves its dramatic climax by the change in meter and phrasing in the last line. The lack of rhyme is forgotten in the jubilant note emphasized by the rising inflection of the final vowel. John Donne frequently used a similar series of verbs to shock the reader into attention as in the following lines:

" . . . . for, you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend."
(G, 88)

Delight in the whispered vows of her lover is summed up in a series of antitheses which, like the elaborations of the metaphysical poets, is extended through several stanzas.

"Many a phrase has the English language,--
I have heard but one
Low as the laughter of the cricket,
Loud as the thunder's tongue;

Murmuring like old Caspian choirs
When the tide's a'lull,
Saying itself in new inflection
Like a whippoorwill;

Breaking in bright orthography
On my simple sleep;
Thundering its perspective
Till I stir and weep--"
(422, lxxvii)

By the use of antithesis she contrasts the soft tones of the lover with the thunderous echoes reverberating in her heart. The short phrases and broken meter of the concluding lines,

"Say it again--Saxon!
Hush--only to me!"

recall us from the lyricism of the preceding stanzas to the actual setting, ending on a playfully dramatic note.

Like John Donne, Emily Dickinson could suggest a dramatic setting with a minimum of detail, sometimes simply by an abrupt beginning which indicates a conversation and occasionally by an unexpected conclusion as that above. Compare

"Doubt me, my dim companion!" (128, v)

or "Alter? When the hills do." (127, iii)

with Donne's abrupt

"So, so, breake off this last lamenting kisse." (G, 23)

One group of poems refers to actual meetings of the lovers. Whether such incidents actually occurred or whether they were dramatizations of relatively unimportant events does not matter. They have been recorded in the book of Emily's life and need be considered only as an expression of her emotional responses, real or imaginary.

"It was a quiet way
He asked if I was his.
I made no answer of the tongue
But answer of the eyes."

The simple description of the first revelation of mutual love changes to a lyric description of emotion so

intense as to obliterate time.

"The world did drop away
As countries from the feet
Of him that leaneth in balloon
Upon an ether street.
. . . .
Eternity it was--before
Eternity was due.

No seasons were to us--
It was not night nor noon
For sunrise stopped upon the place
And fastened it in dawn."
(345, cxxii)

Throughout her poems, the pleasure of anticipation is emphasized, whether it be of joy or pain, for

"Expectation is contentment;
Gain, satiety."
(289, xxviii)

Even when her love seems to have reached the highest peak of rapture, she cries out,

"Oh, sumptuous moment, slower go.
That I may gloat on thee.
'Twill never be the same to starve
Since I abundance see."
(BM, 262)

One of the most thoroughly metaphysical images Miss Dickinson uses is that in which she compares her love to a deed rolled up and put safely away, subtly implying the royal rank to which she has been elevated.

"He put the belt around my life,--
I heard the buckle snap,
And turned away imperial,
My lifetime folding up
Deliberate, as a duke would do
A kingdom's title-deed,--

Henceforth a dedicated sort,
A member of the cloud."
(144, xxxii)

In emphasizing the unity of their love, she uses images which parallel those of the metaphysical poets closely.

"I make his crescent fill or lack
His nature is at full
Or quarter--as I signify,
His tides do I control.

He holds superior in the sky
Or gropes at my command
Behind inferior clouds,
Or round a mist's slow colonnade.

But since we hold a mutual disc
And front a mutual day--
Which is the despot neither knows--
Nor whose the tyranny."
(366, cxxiv)

The symbolism of the moon which indicates a mutual love so integrated that it is impossible to distinguish which lover rules the other is very similar to Donne's famous comparison of lovers to a pair of compasses.

"If they be two, they are two so
As stiffe twin compasses are two,
The soule the fixt foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th'other doe."
(G, 15)

The same argument is developed in very simple imagery in the following:

"Empty my heart of thee--
Its single artery,
Begin to leave thee out--
Simply extinction's date.

Much billow hath the sea,
One Baltic--they,

Subtract thyself, in play,
And not enough of me
Is left to put away--
Myself meant thee.

Erase the root, no tree;
Thee--then no me--
The Heaven's stripped,
Eternity's wide pocket picked."
(351, cxxxi)

The argument here is developed by the use of very simple figures drawn from nature and arithmetic, yet by use of the trivial, Miss Dickinson conveys the essence of strong emotion. Even more simply she expresses the intrinsic unity of their love in a series of phrases characteristically building up to a climax.

"Brain of his brain, blood of his blood,
Two lives, one Being, now."
(352, cxxxiii)

Her reasoning in the following lines in which she repudiates the laws of mathematics to prove her argument is worthy of the nice distinctions drawn by her metaphysical predecessors.

"One and One are One
Two are finished using,
Well enough for schools,
. . . .

Two would be too vast,
For the Soul's comprising."
(356, cxl)

The next group of poems treats of the renunciation of her lover. Legend has it that Emily Dickinson had fallen in love with a married man and that rather than be the cause of

another woman's unhappiness she had chosen to sacrifice her own love. A few poems indicate the actual scenes in which the lovers made their decision.

"I could suffice for Him, I knew,
He could suffice for me;
Yet hesitating Fractions, Both
Surveyed Infinity.

"Would I be whole?" He sudden broached.
My syllable rebelled;
'Twas face to face with Nature forced,
'Twas face to face with God."
(424, lxxxii)

In analyzing the situation she successfully subordinates the emotional tension by combining the personal with the impersonal yet indicates the intensity of the struggle by her reference to the "hesitating Fractions", each incomplete without the other, and by the rebellion of the girl.

Less impersonal is the following account which relates the struggle to make their decision in language effective because of its stark simplicity.

"I rose because he sank--
I thought it would be opposite,
But when his power bent,
My Soul stood straight."

Surveying Infinity, it was she who decided that earthly desires must yield to divine precepts.

"And so with thews of hymn
And sinew from within,
In ways I knew not that
I knew, till then--
I lifted him."
(361, cxlix)

The intensity of emotion is here deepened by the sheer simplicity of the lines and strengthened by the personification of the Soul. The gradual shortening of the lines emphasizes the effect of emotion controlled but dangerously near the breaking point.

More restrained, but equally intense, is "There came a day at summer's full" (133, xiii). The use of religious imagery is maintained throughout, giving a note of solemnity and finality.

> "The time was scarce profaned by speech;
> The symbol of a word
> Was needless, as at sacrament
> The wardrobe of our Lord.
>
> Each was to each the sealed church,
> Permitted to commune this time,
> Lest we too awkward show
> At supper of the Lamb.
> . . . .
> And so when all the time had failed,
> Without external sound,
> Each bound the other's crucifix,
> We gave no other bond."

The choice of imagery sets the sacrifice apart as a consecrated act and puts it on a higher plane, superseding the fleshly claims which cried out in "I rose because he sank" and "I could suffice for him I know". Too, the despairing cry of "I cannot live with you" yields to a note of hope.

> " . . . we shall rise--
> Deposed at length, the grave--
> To that new marriage, justified
> Through Calvaries of Love!"
> (131, xii)

"I cannot live with you" is less coherent, more rambling in thought and in construction, as if it had been written soon after the separation before the poet had succeeded in imposing restraint upon her emotion. Their life, like a discarded cup, must be put away, but she would stay behind to "shut the other's gaze down". She could not rise with him,

"Because your face
Would put out Jesus'."

He had "served Heaven", and would be judged more severely than others.

"And were you lost, I would be,
Though my name
Rang loudest
On the heavenly fame.

And were you saved,
And I condemned to be
Where you were not,
That self were hell to me."

In the last stanza, however, she expresses the loneliness and despair of parting by the dual meaning imparted to the figure.

"So we must keep apart,
You there, I here,
With just the door ajar
That oceans are,
And prayer,
And that pale sustenance,
Despair!"
(131, xii)

In the homely image of "the door ajar", Miss Dickinson has used a simple figure that indicates simultaneously the

closeness of the spiritual bond and the immensity of the physical separation. The courageous attempt to offer the consolation of prayer culminates, however, in the final poignant cry of "Despair".

Her poems of pain and renunciation include the almost uncontrolled cries uttered under the stress of the initial shock, the keen analyses of her emotions, and the gradual reconciliation tempered by a belief that earthly pain would be compensated for by eternal happiness.

Stunned by the realization of her loss, she could only cry out desperately,

"At least to pray is left, is left,
O Jesus! in the air,
I know not which thy chamber is,--
I'm knocking everywhere!"
(176, xliii)

Despair and helplessness are here. There is none of the restraint or passionate analysis of the later poems--only emotion, simple and unrestrained.

Her descriptions of the bewilderment and stupefaction following the first anguish are unequaled in their analyses of her emotions and in the aptness of her imagery.

"I clutched at sands--I groped at shapes--
I touched the tops of films,
I felt the wilderness roll back
Along my golden lines."
(426, lxxxv)

The brevity of the initial clauses, the break in the meter, the choice of tenuous nouns and grasping verbs, all indicate

her haphazard efforts to regain her "moment of brocade", her "drop of India".

In the group of poems analyzing pain Miss Dickinson shows an intellectual acumen and an ingenuity in the presentation of images that equals that of the metaphysical poets and surpasses them in that here is no unnecessary elaboration nor erudite conceit. Each metaphor contributes to the whole unerringly. Each analysis is presented logically, exactly, and often laconically.

The following summarizes pain objectively, but with the intellectual imagination characteristic of metaphysical poetry. In a few lines Miss Dickinson has conveyed the sensation of intense pain followed by an apathetic numbness, which she uses commonplace images to illustrate.

"There is a pain so utter
It swallows Being up,
Then covers the abyss with trance
So memory can step
Around, across, upon it,
As One within a swoon
Goes steady, when an open eye
Would drop him bone by bone."
(366, clx)

Other poems describe her reaction in a more personal way.

"I've dropped my brain, my soul is numb,
The veins that used to run
Stopped palsied, 'tis paralysis
Done perfecter in stone.
Vitality is carved and cool,
My nerve in marble lies,
A breathing woman yesterday

Endowed with paradise.
. . . .
Who wrought Carrara in me
And chiseled all my tune."
(BM, 301)

Skillfully the comparison is developed from numbness to paralysis to stone, completing the development of the image with the reference to marble, one figure growing out of the preceding ingeniously. It is in this keen evolution of thought and analysis of emotion that Miss Dickinson compares best with the metaphysical poets.

More subjective and less intense, as if written after the shock had subsided, is the next poem.

"I'll tell thee all--how blank it grew,
How midnight felt at first to me,
How all the clocks stopped in the world
And sunshine pinched me, 'twas so cold.

Then how the grief got sleepy some,
As if my soul were deaf and dumb."
(BM, 302)

Less personal, but keenly analytical, is this description of the reaction to overwhelming grief.

"After great pain a formal feeling comes--
The nerves sit ceremonious like tombs;
The stiff Heart questions--was it He that bore?
And yesterday--or centuries?"

The unusually long line emphasizes the impression of interminable centuries of dazed bewilderment. In the next stanza the shorter line is better suited to the automatic, unthinking movement of the suffering person.

"The feet mechanical
Go round a wooden way
Of ground or air or Ought, regardless grown,
A quartz contentment like a stone."

In the third line the lengthened meter gives the impression of aimless whirling emphasized by the rapid turn of the phrases. The dull heaviness of the last line is further accentuated in the last stanza.

"This is the hour of lead
Remembered, if outlived,
As freezing persons recollect the snow--
First chill, then stupor, then the letting go."
(365, clviii)

In the rapid summarizing of sensation with an economy of detail Emily Dickinson is unsurpassed. With an imagery that is New England in essence and in simplicity, she bares emotion to the bone, analyzes it with an exactness and awareness of essential detail, but keeps her emotional reaction subordinated to the intellect.

"I tie my hat, I crease my shawl" (368, clxiii) enumerates "Life's little duties", the "miles on miles of nought of action" necessary to "get existence back".

"From blank to blank
A threadless way
I pushed mechanic feet,
To stop or perish
Or advance--
Alike indifferent."
(369, clxv)

repeats the sense of blind, involuntary action.

Renunciation was not accepted without rebellion. Defiance of fate bursts forth in--

"What if I say I shall not wait?
What if I burst the fleshly gate
And pass escaped to thee?
What if I file this mortal off,
See where it hurt me,--that's enough,--
And wade in liberty?"

The image of freeing the soul from its corporeal bonds is frequently used by the metaphysical poets. This is very similar to Katherine Phillips' metaphor in "To My Lucasia in Defense of Declared Friendship" (G, 81):

"Although we know we love, yet while our Soul
  Is thus imprison'd by the Flesh we wear,
There's no way left that bondage to controul,
  But to convey transactions through the Ear."

The emotion expressed in these lines is more impassioned, less restrained, as if written in the first anguish and rebellion of separation.

The brief, clear-cut, often paradoxical definitions which epitomize emotional reaction are stated with intellectual reserve and with an accuracy that extracts the core of the idea with surgical precision.

"Denial is the only fact
Received by the denied."
(369, cxlvii)

"Renunciation
Is a piercing virtue,
The letting go
A presence for an expectation--
Not now."
(362, cl)

"Longing is like the seed
That wrestles in the ground."
(363, cliv)

The first sharp anguish gradually yielded to passive acquiescence, if not resignation, based upon the hope that her sacrifice would be compensated for in eternity. Her later poems express her loneliness while protesting her constancy. And yet despite her sorrow, she could say,

"I could not care to gain
A lesser than the whole."
(426, lxxxiv)

The following poem seems to have been written before the separation was final. In the skillful evolution of the argument it rivals the structure of metaphysical poetry, but the imagery is that of a New England housewife, an excellent example of Emily Dickinson's ability to express feeling in terms of simple, even trivial, acts.

If certain that her lover would arrive in the fall, she would brush

" . . . the summer by
With half a smile and half a spurn,
As housewives do a fly."

If she could see him in a year, she would "wind the months in balls". Centuries she would count on her fingers, and

"If certain, when this life was out,
That yours and mine should be,
I'd toss it yonder like a rind,
And taste eternity."

Her belief that

"To wait eternity is short
If love be at the end."
(BM, 286)

is nullified by the uncertainty of the outcome which

> " . . . goads me, like the goblin bee,
> That will not state its sting."
> (128, vi)

Her capable development of argument, an art that may have been acquired from her father, Lawyer Dickinson, appears in the following:

> "That I did always love,
> I bring thee proof:
> That till I loved
> I did not love enough.
>
> That I shall love alway,
> I offer thee
> That love is life,
> And life is immortality."
> (129, viii)

Like Emerson, Emily Dickinson's philosophy was rooted in a belief in compensation. Earthly love denied would be rewarded by fulfillment in heaven.

> "Before the judgement-seat of God,
> The last and second time
>
> These fleshless lovers met,
> A heaven in a gaze,
> A heaven of heavens, the privilege
> Of one another's eyes."
> (135, xv)

The pain of love denied is not too high a price to pay.

> "To lose thee, sweeter than to gain
> All other hearts I knew.
> 'Tis true the drought is destitute
> But then I had the dew."
> (148, xlii)

The balanced structure and use of contrasting elements is typical of much of her work, as is the epigrammatic quality of the last two lines. She carries out this same parallel structure to express the dual nature of the situation.

"You left me, sweet, two legacies,--
A legacy of love
A Heavenly Father would content
Had He the offer of;

You left me boundaries of pain
Capacious as the sea,
Between eternity and time,
Your consciousness and me."
(127, ii)

Time assuages the pain so that she can say paradoxically,

"It might have been lonelier
Without the loneliness;
I'm so accustomed to my fate
Perhaps the other--peace--
Would interrupt the dark,
And crowd the little room."
(428, lxxxviii)

Eventually she realizes that even her seemingly infinite grief can be healed.

"It ceased to hurt me, though so slow
I could not see the trouble go--
But only knew by looking back
That something had obscured the track.
. . . .
Nor what consoled it--
I could trace,
Except whereas 'twas wilderness
It's better, almost Peace."
(372, clxxi)

More personal and more intense is the realization that the pain induced by contact with objects which recalled their

relationship has lessened.

"I got so I could hear his name
Without--
Tremendous gain!--
That stop-sensation in my soul,
And thunder in the room.

I got so I could walk across
That angle in the floor
Where he turned--so--and I turned how--
And all our sinew tore.

I got so I could stir the box
In which his letters grew--
Without that forcing in my breath
As staples driven through.

Could dimly recollect a Grace--
I think they called it 'God',
Renowned to ease extremity
When formula had failed--"

Here is all the poignancy of broken emotion intensified in the first stanzas by the short lines and broken meter, but gradually brought under control in the more regular meter of the third and fourth. The last stanza, longer than the others, decreases in length and ends with the broken phrases of one who, seeking control, finally breaks down and relapses into incoherency, unconsciously denying her conquest of her emotions.

"If any power behind it be
Not subject to despair,
To care in some remoter way
For so minute affair
A misery--
Itself too vast for interrupting more,
Supremer to--
Superior to--"

(370, clxvi)

Finally she achieves the power of prayer:

"Savior! I've no one else to tell
And so I trouble Thee,
I am the one forgot Thee so.
Dost thou remember me?"
(372, clxix)

As the numbness and sharpness of initial grief subsides she takes comfort in the thought of reunion in eternity.

"'Till death' is narrow loving;
The scantiest heart extant
Will hold you, till your privilege
Of finiteness be spent."
(371, clxviii)

"I live with him, I hear his voice,
I stand alive today
To witness to the certainty
Of immortality."
(152, liv)

In her assertion of the immortality of love, she rivals John Donne when he says:

"Only our love hath no decay;
This, no tomorrow hath, nor yesterday,
Running it never runs from us away,
But truly keeps his first, last, everlasting day."
(G, 8)

Paradoxically her sorrow is beatified by pride in renunciation. The Calvinistic severity of her upbringing coupled with an Emersonian belief in compensation enabled her to extract from her sorrow a martyr-like joy in sacrifice. She examined her grief minutely, analyzed it meticulously, hugged it to her as if it were her dearest possession, and rejoiced in its intensity, remembering that after Calvary came the resurrection.

"Joy to have merited the pain
To merit the release;
Joy to have perished every step
To compass thee at last."
(366, clix)

It is Emily Dickinson's talent to be able to express with simple brevity, often dramatic in its intensity, a wealth of feeling. Using the everyday image of a housewife discussing her marketing, she presents her most vital experience in quatrains stripped of all but essential description. The minuteness of the purchase is contrasted with the magnitude of the price.

"I took one draught of life,
I'll tell you what I paid,
Precisely an existence--
The market price, they said.

They weighed me, dust by dust,
They balanced film with film,
Then handed me my being's worth--
A single dram of Heaven."
(345, cxx)

Later she repeats the figure.

"One Life of so much consequence
That I for it would pay
My Soul's entire income
In ceaseless salary."
(348, cxxvii)

The memory of her love and her suffering became an aching comfort. Contemplation of what might have been yielded a morbid satisfaction.

"Rehearsal to ourselves
Of a withdrawn delight
Affords a bliss like murder,
Omnipotent, acute.

"We will not drop the dirk
Because we love the wound
The dirk commemorate.
Itself remind us that we died."
(367, clxii)

Her analysis of the contradictory emotions involved in painful memories is expressed again in language forceful and paradoxical. It is part of her genius to thus reduce emotion to its barest essentials, free from passion or sentimentality, completely honest in its appraisal.

One moment she exulted that

"'Twas my one glory--
Let it be
Remembered
I was owned of thee."
(166, 307)

The next, she offered her suffering as the one worthwhile gift.

"Too scanty 'twas to die for you,
The merest Greek could that;
The living, sweet, is costlier--
I offer even that.

The dying is a trifle, past,
But living--this include
The dying multifold without
The respite to be dead."
(167, 305)

The argument is developed simply but logically through contrast ending with her paradoxical definition of the never-ending torment of living.

Emily Dickinson excels in explaining the abstract in terms of the concrete, but like other metaphysicians she can

also deal directly in terms of the abstract.

"You constituted time.
I deemed eternity
A revelation of yourself.
'Twas therefore Deity.

The Absolute removed
The relative away,
That I unto himself adjust
My slow idolatry."
(BM, 331)

The argument is developed step by step in logical sequence, and the conclusion is linked to the initial statement unifying the whole.

It is noteworthy that Emily Dickinson presents every point of view from the idealistic to the skeptical. Was she revealing, with characteristic honesty, her own altered emotions when she wrote:

"We outgrow love like other things
  And put it in the drawer,
Till it an antique fashion shows
  Like costumes grandsires wore."
(150, xlix)

The irony of this conceit is directly contradicted by other poems, leaving the reader to deduce for himself which portrayed the real Emily.

"The healed Heart shows its shallow scar
With confidential moan,
Not mended by Mortality
Are fabrics truly torn.
To go its convalescent way
So shameless is to see,
More genuine were Perfidy
Than such Fidelity."
(270, cxli)

Which of these two poems represented her final viewpoint there is no way of ascertaining. Time may have brought forgetfulness as well as peace, but on the whole her love seems to have become less temporal, more spiritual.

"A single screw of flesh
Is all that pins the soul
That stands for Deity to mine
Upon my side the vale."
(431, xcii)

The metaphor used here recalls the lines from John Hall's "An Epicurean Ode" (G, 64).

"Since that the soul doth onely lie
Immersed in matter, chained in sense."

Inevitably her conception of the importance of her own place in the universal scheme of things was relegated to its proper position as part of the eternal plan.

"Of all the souls that stand create
I have elected one.
When sense from spirit files away,
And subterfuge is done;

When that which is and that which was
Apart, intrinsic, stand,
And this brief tragedy of flesh
Is shifted like a sand;

When figures show their royal front
And mists are carved away--
Behold the atom I preferred
To all the lists of clay!"
(137, xix)

Life has become but a "brief tragedy of flesh" engulfed in time, a momentary experience in infinity. Eventually the spirit, stripped of bodily superfluities, stands royal among

the imperial throng. No longer does his face "put out Jesus'"; he is but one of the great multitude. The evolution of the theme and the choice of imagery to present an unsubstantial picture is handled in the best metaphysical fashion.

Although the early poems contain references to the very natural desire to assume position of bride and wife and to perform such homely tasks as to sow "the flowers he preferred", or to smooth "a homely pain", or to

> " . . . . bring the sticks
> To make your cottage gay."
> (358, cxliii)

nowhere is there any suggestion that these are more than wishful dreams. Soon after the separation, she cried,

> "Title divine is mine
> The Wife without
> The Sign.
> Acute degree
> Conferred on me--
> Empress of Calvary."

This poignant litany culminates in the briefest of summaries:

> "Born--Bridalled--
> Shrouded--
> In a day
> Tri-Victory--"

followed by an intensely feminine note of longing:

> "   'My Husband,'
> Women say
> Stroking the melody,
> Is this the way?"
> (154, lvii)

In one of her last poems she recognizes that in death her bridal will be accomplished at last. Her requiem becomes her wedding march.

"A Wife at daybreak I shall be.
Sunset, hast thou a flag for me?"

Sunset furnishes the glowing processional, and at

" . . . Midnight, I have passed from thee
Unto the East and Victory.
. . . .
The Angels bustle in the hall,
Softly my Future climbs the stair."

Triumphantly she cries,

"Eternity, I'm coming, Sir,--"

and realizes the fulfillment of her dreams as she recognizes the one face that she has longed to see.

"Master, I've seen that face before."
(373, clxxii)

"Death but the drift of Eastern gray
Dissolving into dawn away
Before the West begins.
. . . .
'Tis miracle before me then,
'Tis miracle behind, between."
(373, clxxiii)

CONCLUSION

In the love poems of Emily Dickinson is expressed a passionate intensity that ranges from the extremely subjective and purely emotional cry of "At least to pray is left" to that which is subjected to intellectual restraint as in "He put the belt around my life" in which the intensity is confined within the image.

The poems which express the ecstasy and incredible joy of the discovery that love is mutual are written with an exultant intensity that is scarcely to be contained within the metrical form. Typical of these early poems are "Mine by the white election", "'Tis this invites, appals, endows", and "Oh, sumptuous moment slower go".

The lyrical utterances are equally intense, but the passion is subjected to the restraint of the image and form as in "Come slowly, Eden" and "It was a quiet way".

The poems apparently composed under the stress of renunciation are more emotional and unrestrained than those written after the initial anguish had subsided. "I cannot live with you" is unrestrained and rambling yet conveys the deep intensity of despair, while the passionate rebellion of "What if I say I shall not wait" has an intensity that is both poignant and extremely personal.

In others passionate intensity smolders beneath the restraint imposed by the imagery, sometimes, however, escaping momentarily as in "I could suffice for Him".

The emotional impact of "I rose because he sank" is increased by the stoical simplicity of the lines.

The religious symbolism of "There came a day at summer's full" is an excellent example of the restraint imposed upon emotional expression by intellectual imagery, yet the

personal element lends an intensity nonetheless keen because of the outward tranquility of the scene depicted.

"I've dropped my brain" is more subjective than most of the poems about pain because of the use of the first person, but the choice of imagery prevents the emotion from getting out of bounds. "I'll tell thee all" seems more subjective because of the personal element and the commonplace figures used to describe the sensation.

Passionate intensity breaks through the meter of "I got so I could hear his name", breathes through the wistfulness of "It might have been lonelier" and vibrates throughout "Till death is narrow living" and "'Twas my one glory".

"Of all the souls that stand create" reveals the intensity of anticipation as does "A Wife at daybreak I shall be". Like the other poems which dream of the happiness of marriage "Title divine is mine" incorporates the poignancy and wistfulness of love denied, a very personal note emphasizing the pathos of the whole in the conclusion.

Intensity is present in the poetry of Emily Dickinson but it is usually subordinate to the impersonal intellectual analysis with which she examines and records her emotions. In the analysis of emotion Emily Dickinson shows a keenness of perception and an ability to record her observations accurately and concisely from the impartial viewpoint of the

bystander, rather than from that of the subject, that corresponds to the technique of the metaphysical poets.

Her most exact and detailed analyses are seen in the group of poems describing pain: "I've dropped my brain", "There is a pain so utter", and "After great pain a formal feeling comes". Emotions are dissected with microscopic precision and interpreted in terms of familiar objects and experiences exactly, concisely, and objectively.

Her most striking analyses are the brief definitions which extract the essence of emotion and present it as impersonally but much more effectively than her favorite lexicon. "Renunciation" and "Longing is the seed" are typical of these laconic observations.

"'Tis this invites, appals, endows" is representative of the swift summarization of complex and rapidly changing emotion, stripped of all but essential details, yet vivid in the ingenuity of its presentation.

"I clutched at sands" conveys the bewilderment following shock, imagery and meter combined to produce the desired effect.

The dual nature of her love is presented in balanced structure and simple imagery in "You left me, sweet, two legacies", one aspect contrasted with the other without destroying the unity of the whole.

The exquisite pain derived from reflection of "what

might have been" is analyzed in "Rehearsal to ourselves" by means of paradox and Macbethian imagery.

The poems chosen to illustrate this chapter are but a few of the total number of love poems but they portray every mood experienced by a lover: the ecstasy of avowed love, the shyness of the first meetings, anticipation of the lover's arrival, the sweetness of whispered vows, the sense of unity, rebellion at separation, the resolute act of renunciation, avowals of eternal fidelity, bewilderment of loss, anguish of renunciation, mechanical pursuit of living, anticipation of reunion in paradise, loneliness, alleviation of grief, prayer, the poignancy of joy in sacrifice, voluntary pain aroused by reminiscence, and confidence in reunion in immortality.

In the expression of passionate intensity, in the intellectual analysis of emotion, and in the variety of moods expressed, Emily Dickinson is comparable to the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century. In addition to the similarities in content there are also very obvious resemblances in style and form which will be demonstrated more fully in later chapters.

The roughness of form noticeable in the work of the metaphysical poets appears in the work of Emily Dickinson also. She frequently sacrifices rhyme to produce the desired effect by shocking one into attention through the unexpectedness of the dissonance. The calculated irregularity of the

meter throws into prominence an element which might be unnoticed in a more regular form. The unconventional use of rhyme and meter is so skillfully adapted to the reproduction of intense emotion and to the dynamic presentation of ideas that the momentary lack of harmony is forgotten in the effectiveness of the complete poem.

Like John Donne, Emily Dickinson excels in rapid accumulation of verbs or nouns that challenge the attention by the dramatic force of their presentation. Like him, too, she frequently indicates a dramatic setting by her abrupt introductions and the conversational tone with which she develops her theme.

In many instances her choice of imagery parallels that of the metaphysical poets very closely, particularly in those which describe the soul as chained to the flesh. Other resemblances have been noted in the poetry of John Donne, John Hall, and Katherine Phillips. Her ability to develop an elaborate figure, as in "He put the belt around my life", in which the human element is subordinated to the play of intellect yet never obliterated is characteristic of metaphysical elaborations.

There are other similarities to be noted in her use of metaphor and paradox and in the development of argument, but these will be considered in detail in later chapters.

CHAPTER III

"CONCLUSION IS THE COURSE OF ALL"

Throughout Emily Dickinson's letters are constant references to the death of her friends and their relatives and a probing desire to know the details of their last moments. This insatiable concern with the physical and spiritual aspects of death is reflected in her poetry in which she has recorded her observations and speculations in minute detail.

In general the poems may be divided into three groups: direct observations of actual death and burial scenes, imaginative conceptions and dramatizations of death, and reflections on the relationship of death to life and immortality.

To her, death was an adventure, a challenge, a mystery to be solved if possible by careful scrutiny. Death

> "Is but the likeness of the brook
> That menaced, not to slay us,
> But to invite by that dismay
> Which is the zest of sweetness
> To the same flower Hesperian,
> Decoying but to greet us."
> (BM, 422)

Paradoxically she compares death to the brook at flood which enhances the beauty of the flower, Immortality, by seemingly making it impossible of achievement. Only the brave dare to accept the challenge.

More concisely she defines death as

> ". . . a dialogue between
> The spirit and the dust."

The contrast between the spirit and Death is strengthened by the use of personification and the dramatization of the struggle. The decisiveness of the conclusion is emphasized by the quiet finality of the spirit's response.

> "'Dissolve," says Death. The spirit, 'Sir,--
> I have another trust.'
>
> Death doubts it, argues from the ground.
> The spirit turns away,
> Just laying off, for evidence,
> An overcoat of clay."
> (170, xxxi)

In a letter to Mr. James D. Clark in August, 1882, Miss Dickinson asked for information concerning the death of Dr. Charles Wadsworth, the man who influenced her life probably more than any other individual.

> "I hope you may tell me all you feel able of that last interview, for he spoke with warmth of you as a friend."[1]

Later in the same year she wrote to Mr. Clark:

> "I felt too that perhaps you . . . might know if his children were near him at the last, or if they grieved to lose that most sacred life."[2]

In 1883 she made a similar inquiry of Mr. Charles H. Clark about the death of his brother James.

"I hope he was able to speak with you in his closing

---

[1] Todd, Mabel Loomis, editor, Letters of Emily Dickinson, third edition, (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1931), p. 344.

[2] Ibid., p. 345.

> moment. One accent of courage as he took his flight would assist your heart. I am eager to know all you may tell me of those final days."[1]

This ubiquitous curiosity about the emotions of the dying is expressed in one of her longer poems.

"To know just how he suffered would be dear;
To know if any human eyes were near
To whom he could intrust his wavering gaze
Until it settled firm on Paradise."

To this she added the desire "to know if he was patient, part content", of what he thought, "of home, or God", "and wishes had he any?", what words he spoke and whom he named at the last.

"Was he afraid, or tranquil?
Might he know
How conscious consciousness could grow
Till love that was, and love too blest to be,
Meet--and the junction be Eternity?"
(164, xix)

Several poems record the anxious strain of watching by the deathbed, as she must have watched by her mother's.

"We noticed smallest things,--
Things overlooked before,
By this great light upon our minds
Italicized, as 'twere.
. . . .
We waited while she passed;
It was a narrow time,
Too jostled were our souls to speak,
At length the notice came.

She mentioned and forgot;
Then lightly as a reed
Bent to the water, shivered scarce,
Consented, and was dead."
(165, xx)

---

[1] Todd, op. cit., p. 351.

The intensity of the strain under which the watchers labored is emphasized by the acuteness of perception by which the insignificant is brought into focus during the period of suspense. Only one thought was uppermost in this "narrow time". "The actual passing of the spirit is summarized as briefly as the act itself, its very brevity contrasted with the strain of the watching and the "awful leisure" which follows death.

The unbearable stillness of the room of the dying is intensified by references to the usually unheeded sounds of everyday life.

> "'Twas comfort in her dying room
> To hear the living clock,
> A short relief to have the wind
> Walk boldly up and knock,
> Diversion from the dying theme
> To hear the children play,"

The contrast between the casual, comforting noises of normal life and the hush of the sickroom wrings a cry of protest from the watcher.

> "But wrong, the mere
> That these could live,--
> And This of ours must die!"
> (249, lxxv)

Impersonally as a scientist she records the expression of the dying person, noting the successive changes in appearance as consciousness yields to death.

> "I've seen a dying eye
> Run round and round a room
> In search of something, as it seemed,
> Then cloudier become;

"And then, obscure with fog,
And then be soldered down,
Without disclosing what it be,
'Twere blessed to have seen."
(162, xv)

With characteristic compactness she telescopes the experience into a quatrain--brief, impersonal, yet intense. The rapid succession of images in the first three lines culminates decisively in the finality of the last line, its finality emphasized by the choice of words and consonants.

"A throe upon the features,
A hurry in the breath,
An ecstasy of parting
Denominated 'Death'."
(193, lxxviii)

Personal observation is replaced by an imaginative, but equally effective, conception of death inexorably carrying a soul to God.

"It's coming--the postponeless Creature,
It gains the block and now it gains the door,
Chooses its latch from all the other fastenings,
Enters with a--'You know me, Sir?'
Simple salute and certain recognition,
Bold--were it enemy--brief were it friend,
Dresses each house in crepe and icicle,
And carries one out of it to God."
(331, xcix)

The commonplace tone and prosaic actions enhance the dramatic quality of the account, its very terseness contrasting with the significance of the act.

Even the changes which occur in mortification have been set down with detailed accuracy, the figures of cold and stone pervading these poems.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
LIBRARY

"'Twas warm at first like us,
Until there crept thereon
A chill, like frost upon a glass,
Till all the scene be gone.

The forehead copied stone,
The fingers grew too cold
To ache, and like a skater's brook
The busy eyes congealed.

It straightened--that was all--
It crowded cold to cold--
It multiplied indifference
As Pride were all it could.

And even when with cords
'Twas lowered like a freight,
It made no signal, nor demurred,
But dropped like adamant."
(325, lxxxix)

By use of contrast, Miss Dickinson conveys the same idea in more compact form using everyday imagery from masonry. Her peculiar ability to express the immaterial by means of simple and concrete figures is shown in the metaphor comparing the unseen passing of the soul to the extraction of a kernel without injuring the husk.

"Too cold is this
To warm with sun,
Too stiff to bended be,
To joint this agate were a feat
Outstaring masonry.
How went the agile kernel out--
Contusion of the husk,
Nor rip, nor wrinkle indicate,--
But just an Asterisk."
(249, lxxvi)

The ingenious metaphor is worthy of the best of the metaphysical poets.

The fascination which death held for her is expressed

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
LIBRARY

paradoxically in her account of the release from the tension of watching and waiting.

"'Tis so appalling it exhilarates!
So over-horror it half captivates!
The Soul stares after it--secure,
To know the worst leaves no dread more.

. . . .

How easy torment now--
Suspense kept sawing so!
The truth is bold and cold,
But that will hold."

The unrestrained emotion and the rapid transition of thought in the remainder of the poem seem to indicate that it was written while still under the stress of emotion aroused by the experience, before the poet had time to regain a proper sense of perspective.

"It set the fright at liberty,
And terror's free--
Gay, ghastly holiday!"
(452, cxxviii)

Realization of the loss of the loved one deepens the consciousness of his dearness.

"In broken mathematics
We estimate our prize,
Vast, in its fading ratio,
To our penurious eyes!"
(180, lii)

The use of the mathematical symbol to express the extent of the emotion is ingenious and more effective than a more personal expression because of its intellectual restraint. The dual connotation of the word broken which may be interpreted as referring to the application of mathematical rules

and to the emotional state of the mourner as well, strengthens the effect and links the stanza to the preceding and more personal one.

Even more simply she describes the vast sense of isolation which overwhelms the watcher at the conclusion of the burial service.

"There is a finished feeling
Experienced at graves--
A leisure of the future,
A wilderness of size,

By death's bold exhibition
Preciser what we are
And the eternal function
Enabled to infer."
(BM, 394)

The simplicity of the language coupled with the impersonality of the observation accentuate the sensation of an endless stretch of time and the stunning realization of man's insignificance in the eternal scheme.

The impersonal description of the shadow cast by grief is intensified by the poignant cry that breaks through the restraint of the lines in a very real expression of anguish.

"A shade upon the mind there passes
As when on noon
A cloud the mightysun encloses,
Remembering

That some there be too numb to notice.
Oh, God!
Why give if thou must take away
The loved?"
(BM, 397)

Henry Vaughan uses a simile very like that used above in "Regeneration" (G, 142).

" . . . and sinne
Like Cloud eclipsed my mind."

While many of the poems express the grief and sorrow which accompany death, others rejoice because the loved one has achieved eternal happiness.

"Immured in Heaven! What a Cell!
Let every bondage be,
Thou Sweetest of the Universe,
Like that which ravished Thee!"
(254, lxxxviii)

The paradoxical development of the poem and the choice of imagery is very similar to that of John Donne's sonnet, "Batter My Heart, Three-person'd God" (G, 88):

"Take me to you, imprison'mee, for I
Except you'enthrall mee, never shall be free,
Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee."

In a more whimsical mood she imagines death as a wedding of fairy-like delicacy, but the conceits are so modified by allusions to the appendages of death that the theme is maintained throughout the first part of the poem although it is subordinated to the fantasy in the conclusion.

"Dropped into the
Ether Acre!
Wearing the sod gown--
Bonnet of Everlasting laces--
Brooch frozen on!
Horses of blonde--
And coach of silver
Baggage a strapped Pearl!
Journey of Down,
And whip of Diamond--
Riding to meet the Earl!"
(249, lxxiii)

From simple definitions she paradoxically develops the

concept of the infinite wealth contained within the narrow limits of the grave.

"A coffin is a small domain
Yet able to contain
A rudiment of paradise
In its diminished plane.

A grave is a restricted breadth
Yet ampler than the sun
And all the seas he populates
And lands he looks upon,

To him who on its low repose
Bestows a single friend--
Circumference without relief,
Or estimate, or end."
(BM, 386)

Again the immeasureableness of emotion is expressed through commonplace imagery in the first two stanzas, and by the choice of nouns in the last. Circumference here is used in its former sense which indicated a radiating out from the source rather than an enclosing as pointed out by Miss Margery McKay in a thesis written at Swarthmore College[1].

One of the finest examples of Miss Dickinson's ability to express the intangible in terms of the material is demonstrated in the following:

"The bustle in a house
The morning after death
Is solemnest of industries
Enacted upon earth,--

The sweeping up the heart,
And putting love away
We shall not want to use again
Until eternity."
(166, xxi)

---

[1] Whicher, op. cit., p. 211.

Interest in the effect of death on those about her led to efforts to solve the problem of what lay beyond the silence of the grave. One result of these speculations was a series of imaginative poems in which she tried to express vicariously the sensations of death and immortality.

One of these poems is a very elaborate interpretation of the acute perception of a soul about to be interred. The impression is developed as ingeniously as that of any metaphysical poem by using the figure of the funeral ceremony. The skillful juxtaposition of the customary acts of the mourners and the effect upon the seemingly passive corpse creates a credible illusion. It is an excellent example of Miss Dickinson's ability to interpret the abstract in terms of everyday actions.

"I felt a funeral in my brain,
   And mourners, to and fro,
Kept treading, treading, till it seemed
   That sense was breaking through.

And when they all were seated,
   A service like a drum
Kept beating, beating, till I thought
   My mind was going numb.

And then I heard them lift a box,
   And creak across my soul
With those same boots of lead, again,
   Then space began to toll

As all the heavens were a bell.
   And Being but an ear,
And I and silence some strange race,
   Wrecked, solitary, here."
(205, cxii)

Sometimes her poetry is filled with skepticism and a reluctance to investigate the unknown; at others, she is impatient to lay aside her "overcoat of clay" and penetrate the mystery of what lies beyond the grave. One poem expresses vividly her disappointment in failing to reach eternity just as she seemed about to enter. This may be a record of her emotions when she regained consciousness after the attack which preceded her final illness.

"Just lost when I was saved!
Just felt the world go by!
Just girt me for the onset with eternity,
When breath blew back,
And on the other side
I heard recede the disappointed tide!"
(40, lxxxii)

Sometimes she anticipates the journey with all the gaiety of a child about to start on a pleasure jaunt, too excited to bid more than a casual good-by to those he leaves behind.

"Tie the strings to my life, my Lord,
Then I am ready to go!
Just a look at the horses--
Rapid! That will do!"
(208, cxviii)

In another she speaks with the petulant accent of a spoiled child whose request has been denied by older children.

"Saucy, saucy seraph
To elude me so.
Father! They won't tell me!
Won't you tell them to?"
(BM, 400)

Frequently she personifies abstract ideas to convey

her interpretation more dramatically. Death she portrays as a stranger whose past is cloaked in mystery.

"Dust is the only secret,
Death, the only one
You cannot find out all about
In his native town:
Nobody knew his father,
Never was a boy,
Hadn't any playmates
Or early history.

Industrious, laconic,
Punctual, sedate,
Bolder than a Brigand,
Swifter than a Fleet,
Builds like a bird too,
Christ robs the nest--
Robin after robin
Smuggled to rest!"
(260, cvi)

The last stanza is a rapid enumeration of Death's characteristics in much the same manner as that of Donne but with a laconism that is purely New England.

In another poem Death is the driver of the carriage to eternity. The account of the meeting is given in simple style so that the event is comparable to the neighborly custom of offering a ride to a fellow townsman.

"Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
And Immortality."
(168, xxvii)

Paradoxically Death becomes the marriage of the soul to the Trinity expressed in an exultant paean which contrasts this eternal joy with the ephemeral quality of earthly unions.

"Given in marriage unto thee,
   Oh, thou celestial host!
Bride of the Father and the Son,
   Bride of the Holy Ghost!

Other betrothal shall dissolve,
   Wedlock of will decay,
Only the keeper of this seal
   Conquers mortality."
(197, lxxxix)

The most metaphysical pronouncements of Emily Dickinson on death are to be found, not in her actual observations or imaginative experiences, but in philosophical reflections concerning the significance of death and in her speculations as to what lies beyond. Cleverly she shows the dual position of death midway between time and eternity by means of a skillful development of argument, balancing known facts against conjecture, the finite against the infinite.

"The admiration
And contempts of time
Show justest through an open tomb--
The dying, as it were a height,
Reorganizes estimate,
And what we saw not
We distinguish clear,
And mostly see not
What we saw before.
'Tis companion vision--
Light enabling light--
The Finite furnished
With the Infinite--
Convex and concave witness,
Back toward time,
And forward toward
The God of Him."
(336, cvi)

Throughout she maintains a nice balance between the finite and the infinite perspective. The logical structure

and nice precision with which she contrasts the two are equal to that of the best of the metaphysical poems and superior to many because of their clarity and straightforward development. The ocular image is ingeniously expanded to illustrate the duality of her theme.

The importance of death is characterized with brevity and conciseness as

"That short potential stir
That each can make but once,
That bustle so illustrious
'Tis almost consequence."
(162, xiii)

Again she has succeeded in presenting the abstract in terms of human experience, ironically relegating the event to a subordinate position. Her imagery is comparable to that of Sir William Davenant who described death as

"A short dark passage to Eternal Light."
(G, 159)

The inexorability of death is contrasted with the vicissitudes of time.

"All but Death can be adjusted;
Dynasties repaired,
Systems settled in their sockets,
Centuries removed,--

Wastes of lives resown with colors
By supremer springs,
Death--unto itself exception--
Is exempt from change."
(321, lxxix)

The argument is systematically developed by contrasting the inflexibility of Death with the perennial succession of

temporal activities, culminating in a reaffirmation of the original premise.

The development of the abstract in terms of common experience is admirably demonstrated in the following commentary on life and death:

"The opening and the close
Of being are alike,
Or differ, if they do,
As bloom upon a stalk

That from an equal seed
Unto an equal bud
Go parallel, perfected
In that they have decayed."
(BM, 381)

In general Miss Dickinson arrives at her conclusions by a shrewd application of deductions made from observation of nature and experience, rather than from scientific analysis and objectivity. On occasion, however, scientific truths have been adapted to prove the logic of metaphysical ratiocination.

"Ashes denote that fire was;
Respect the grayest pile
For the departed creature's sake
That hovered there awhile.

Fire exists the first in light,
And then consolidates,--
Only the chemist can disclose
Into what carbonates."
(51, cxiii)

The chemical argument used to substantiate her belief in immortality is repeated, in more concise form, again.

"The chemical conviction
That naught be lost
Enable in disaster
My fractured trust."

With a terse precision that ignores all but essential factors, she presents her view of immortality substantiated by scientific analogy.

> "The faces of the atoms
> If I shall see,
> How more the finished creatures
> Departed me!" (BM, 396)

The concluding stanza is similar to Henry King's conception of immortality.

> " . . . then we shall rise,
> And view our selves with clearer eyes
> In that calm Region, where no night
> Can hide us from each others sight."
> (G, 204)

By means of paradox she presents man's tenuous conviction of the existence of Paradise. Through personification she implies that immortality is a continuation of life with death as the dividing factor.

> "Of Paradise' existence
> All we know
> Is the uncertain certainty,
> But its vicinity infer
> By its bisecting
> Messenger."
> (BM, 424)

No one theory of death and immortality is maintained consistently throughout this group of poems. Death is considered from every angle with analytical curiosity. Miss Dickinson examines the subject from every viewpoint with microscopic precision and records her reaction impartially, whether it be one of hope or despair, assurance or skepticism.

Man's reluctance, not to accept immortality, but to venture across the unexplored territory intervening is expressed in terms of everyday experience.

"'Tis not that dying hurts us so,
'Tis living hurts us more.
But dying is a different way,
A kind behind the door."
(BM, 379)

Frank skepticism runs through many of her poems.

"These tested our horizon,
Then disappeared,
As birds before achieving
A latitude.

Our retrospection of them
A fixed delight,
But our anticipation
A dice--a doubt."
(BM, 403)

The balance of thought seemingly to be effected in the last stanza is sharply transformed to antithesis. The skepticism is made more effective by the abruptness of the break in the meter, the dissonance in rhyme and the challenge of the faulty use of dice, all of which emphasize the complete reversal of the expected affirmation.

Her ability to express abstract ideas in terms of familiar objects is again shown in her conception of the Infinite as man, but man enlarged to gigantic proportions.

"They leave us with the Infinite.
But He is not a man,
His fingers are the size of fists,
His fists, the size of men.

And whom He foundeth with His arm
As Himmaleh shall stand,

"Gibralter's everlasting shoe
Poised lightly on His Hand.

So trust Him, comrade! You for you,
And I, for you and me.
Eternity is ample,
And quick enough, if true."
(BM, 416)

The effect of this sweeping evolution of the central idea is nullified by the unexpected restriction imposed by the skeptical if true. Again the falling intonation and the jarring effect produced by the failure to use rhyme in the last stanza emphasize the irony of the interpolation.

In death men finally achieve true democracy.

"Not any higher stands the grave
  For heroes than for men."
(200, xcviii)

"Color, Caste, Denomination--
These are Time's affair.
Death's diviner classifying
Does not know they are.

As in sleep--all here forgotten,
Tenets put behind,
Death's large democratic fingers
Rub away the brand.
. . . .

Equal butterfly

They emerge from His obscuring;
What Death knows so well,
Our minuter intuitions
Deem incredible."
(280, viii)

The argument is developed through contrast of the narrowness of temporal prejudices and the leveling influence of Death. The change from life to eternity is compared to the

emergence of a butterfly from its chrysalis, the supernatural again expressed in terms of the natural.

In striking contrast to her usual direct development of argument is this more dramatic assertion of faith by means of question and implication.

"Afraid? Of whom am I afraid?
Not death; for who is he?
The porter of my father's lodge
As much abasheth me.

Of life? 'Twere odd I fear a thing
That comprehendeth me
In one or more existences
At Deity's decree.

Of resurrection? Is the east
Afraid to trust the morn
With her fastidious forehead?
As soon impeach my crown!"
(167, xxiv)

Meditation on the incessant change of seasons, each seemingly concluded only to be revived again, caused her to comment on man's immunity from this natural process.

"Conclusion is the course of all,
Almost to be perennial,
And then elude stability
Recalls to immortality."
(244, lxv)

In contrast to the elaborate figures drawn from nature in the first stanzas, the conclusion is expressed in abstract terms by means of paradoxical and ingenious reasoning.

CONCLUSION

Most of the speculations on the mystery of death are expressed with impersonal curiosity and intellectual objectivity, but in a number of these poems passionate intensity lends a more personal touch.

"'Twas comfort in her dying room" voices rebellion that a loved one should die while normal activities proceed uninterrupted. Anguish deepened by the incomprehensibility of her loss provokes her to protest against the justice of God in "A shade upon the mind there passes".

Unrestrained emotion, emphasized by the rambling structure, overflows in "'Tis so appalling it exhilarates" to express the strange fascination which death always exerted over Emily Dickinson. Intense curiosity is mixed with grief, relief from tension, and horror, expressed with a passion that repels.

"A coffin is a small domain" conveys the sensation of grief stretching interminably through time that is experienced at the grave. "Immured in Heaven", on the other hand, expresses pure joy that heavenly bliss has been bestowed upon the loved one.

One of the strangest expressions of intense emotion has been made in "I felt a funeral in my brain" in which Miss Dickinson has succeeded in conveying the sensations of the

spirit about to enter eternity.

Intense desire to experience immortality is expressed in her keen regret that eternity should be snatched away when just within reach in "Just lost when I was saved". Exultation at the thought of her heavenly bridal rings from "Given in marriage unto thee".

Fear of the unknown is dramatically denied in "Afraid? Of whom am I afraid?"

The analysis of emotion is carried out in this section with detachment and perspicuity, the intellectual consistently predominant over the emotional. Some of the observations deal with the quickened perceptions of the watchers at the death-bed, intense preoccupation enhanced by the unnatural prominence into which trivial objects are thrown as in "We noticed smallest things" and "'Twas comfort in her dying room".

Others analyze the inarticulate emotion expressed in the rapid transition from life to death in which there is neither time nor strength to voice one's thoughts. Such analyses are found in "I've seen a dying eye" and in the more impersonal "A throe upon the features" in which the tenseness of the final moment of life has been compressed into a quatrain.

"'Twas warm at first like us" summarizes the rapid changes which occur in mortification.

"In broken mathematics" expresses in abstract terms the suddenly intensified consciousness of the dearness of that which is beyond reach. More concretely she conveys the same idea in "A coffin is a small domain", while "There is a finished feeling" analyzes the sensations of a timeless void and of consciousness of infinitesimal insignificance of which the mourner is acutely aware.

With uncanny precision she develops the tenseness and unreality of death viewed from within the grave in the imaginative "I felt a funeral in my brain".

Death she characterizes in terms of common experience. "Dust is the only secret" is a dramatic analysis with death personified. In "That short potential stir", however, she defines death with characteristic brevity, expressing the intrinsic nature of the phenomenon in terms of human experience.

One of the cleverest analyses is that in which she presents the dual character of death, contrasting the integral features with clarity and precision.

Necessity for emotional expression of her love led Miss Dickinson to secure relief in poetry; continual speculation on the mysteries of death also resulted in a large group of poems. Like the love poems, these portrayed death from every angle, physical and spiritual: analyzed it, pondered over it, accepted and rejected existing theories, and both welcomed and repulsed its inevitable arrival.

Every mood is reflected in the body of these poems. Many are concerned with curiosity to know the details of the death of others, some analyzed the emotions of the watchers, others sought to interpret the sensations of the corpse. Rebellion because of the loss of a loved one becomes joy at the thought of a soul happy in Heaven. In one poem she expresses the fascination, coupled with horror, that death holds for us. In others she speculates on how the soul escaped from the flesh. Several note the sudden realization of the value of that which is lost and the emotions that overwhelm one at the grave. The cleaning of the house emphasizes the loneliness of those left behind. Yet even in commenting on so serious a subject her innate whimsy breaks out in the imaginative "Dropped into the Ether Acre".

Many of these poems are the result of her efforts to penetrate the secret of the grave. Some are the purely imaginative poems in which she tries to convey her feelings on being buried. Others are gay and whimsical, and the voyage to eternity is pictured as a gay excursion. In one she speaks with the petulancy of a spoiled child whose request has been denied. Another is a dramatic interpretation of a ride with death.

Her yearning to experience the thrill of eternity is expressed in her regret at being saved while on the verge of entering immortality, but many of her poems express a

reluctance to put off mortality. Others are frankly skeptical. Several present ingenious arguments to prove the logic or belief in immortality of the soul.

In addition to the comparisons made to the work of the metaphysical poets in Chapter II, examples have been given of further similarities to the work of Donne, Vaughan, and Henry King. Other generalizations will be made in Chapters IV and V.

CHAPTER IV

"THE COLOSSAL SUBSTANCE OF IMMORTALITY"

Speculations on the problems of immortality were an inevitable accompaniment of Emily Dickinson's absorption with the riddle of death. As with all questions studied by her inquiring mind, this, too, was subjected to her "gem tactics", each facet examined with microscopic precision from every angle and her observations reported with characteristic accuracy and honesty. Her conclusions were based upon a sensitive awareness of the effect of natural phenomena upon mankind and his reaction to the intangible experiences of life, not upon the scientific studies of the day, but they were expressed with an intellectual detachment and a subtle comprehension of the relationship between seemingly unrelated factors that place these poems among the best of the metaphysical pronouncements.

The fascination exerted upon her by the problem of eternity overshadowed all others.

"Low at my problem bending
Another problem comes,
Larger than mine, serener,
Involving statelier sums;

I check my busy pencil,
My ciphers slip away,
Wherefore, my baffled fingers,
Time Eternity?"
(250, lxxx)

The eternal enigma supersedes all other questions. Frequently mathematics is the figure used to apprehend the thought and convey its tenuousness, as in this instance, by contrasting the finite with the infinite in terms of common experience.

With singular comprehension she stated the problem in all its tantalizing intangibility.

"This world is not conclusion;
   A sequel stands beyond,
Invisible, as music,
   But positive, as sound.
It beckons and it baffles;
   Philosophies don't know,
And through a riddle, at the last,
   Sagacity must go.
To guess it puzzles scholars;
   To gain it, men have shown
Contempt of generations,
   And crucifixion known."
(195, lxxxi)

Her choice of intangible but none the less real experiences as similes refutes the materialistic determinism which would reject the unmeasureable, yet retains the elusive character of the problem which challenges proof while evading it. Like Sidney Godolphin, she realizes the solution is beyond the intellectual comprehension of the scholars.

"But since noe creature comprehends
The cause of causes, end of ends,
Hee who himself vouchsafes to know
Best pleases his creator soe.
. . . .
Then though wee do not know, we love."
(G, 121)

Henry Vaughan also expresses the problem.

"Dear, beauteous death: the Jewel of the Just,
   Shining no where but in the dark;

What mysteries do lie beyond thy dust;
  Could man outlook that mark!"
                    (G, 149)

In withdrawing from the world and its petty distractions into that solitude which enables one to meditate upon the mysteries of time and eternity, great souls have succeeded in touching momentarily upon things eternal.

"The Soul's superior instants
Occur to Her alone,
When friend and earth's occasion
Have infinite withdrawn.

Or she, Herself, ascended
To too remote a height
For lower recognition
Than Her Omnipotent.

This mortal abolition
Is seldom, but as fair
As apparition--subject
To autocratic air.

Eternity's disclosure
To favorites, a few,
Of the Colossal substance
Of Immortality."
            (232, xxxiii)

Intensity is here subordinated to the intellectual detachment with which the experience is described. The development of the thought through the use of abstract terms conveys the sensation of remoteness and exclusiveness. Andrew Marvell has also described the experience of mind withdrawn from mundane things to a rarer atmosphere.

"Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less
Withdraws into its happiness;
The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find;

Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds and other seas,
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade."[1]

In interpreting the infinite in terms of the finite, the supernatural in terms of natural, even trivial, experiences, Emily Dickinson shows a rare apprehension of similarities in apparently dissimilar experiences.

"The soul's distinct connection
With immortality
Is best disclosed by danger,
Or quick calamity,--

As lightning on a landscape
Exhibits sheets of place
Not yet suspected but for flash
And bolt and suddenness."
(335, ciii)

The analogy between the spiritual and the physical experiences is expressed with clarity, dramatic in its simplicity, and brevity, effective in its logic. Such evanescent contacts with immortality are rare, flashing through consciousness with a brilliance that leaves one unsatisfied with the things of earth.

"Did our Best Moment last
'Twould supersede the Heaven.
A few,--and they by risk,--procure
So this sort are not given

Except as stimulants
In cases of despair

---

[1] Whiting, B. J. et al., editors, The College Survey of English Literature, Volume One, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946), p. 694.

Or stupor. The reserve
These heavenly moments are--

A grant of the Divine--
That certain as it comes,
Withdraws, and leaves the dazzled Soul
In her unfurnished room."
(384, xviii)

The conclusion at which she has arrived is stated matter of factly and then elaborated with an intellectual detachment through which the intensity of the experience is glimpsed in the last lines, the overwhelming splendor of the incident contrasted with the void which existence suddenly becomes.

Constantly uppermost in Emily Dickinson's mind was the belief in a law of balance by which seemingly contradictory forces actually complemented one another, emphasizing and enriching each other by contrast.

"Must be a woe,
A loss or so
To bend the eye
Best beauty's way.

But once aslant
It gains delight
As clarified
As stalactite.

A common bliss
Were had for less,
The price--is
Even as the Grace.

Our Lord thought no
Extravagance
To pay--a Cross!"
(386, xxiii)

Tersely and simply she develops her argument that beauty can be achieved to the fullest extent only if the purchaser

pays the price, concluding with a dramatic implication.

Herbert expresses the same belief more briefly.

> "For, if I imp my wing on thine,
> Affliction shall advance the flight in me."
> (G, 104)

In more compact and impersonal form she expressed the same hypothesis in mathematical terms.

> "For each ecstatic instant
> We must an anguish pay
> In keen and quivering ratio
> To the ecstasy.
>
> For each beloved hour
> Sharp pittances of years,
> Bitter contested farthings
> And coffers heaped with tears."
> (19, xxxvii)

The intellectual detachment implied by the use of the mathematical figure becomes imbued with passionate intensity by the choice of modifiers in the first stanza. Keen and quivering transform ratio from an impersonal mathematical expression to one infinite in its implications of anguish. The contrast effected in the first stanza is repeated in the second, and emphasized by the multiplication of images and the choice of words.

Preoccupation with the existence of the soul was, of course, a necessary corollary of the attempts to solve the problem of eternity. In the preceding chapter Emily Dickinson ingeniously drew an analogy between scientifically proved facts and the existence of the soul. With characteristic skill in interpreting the supernatural in terms of the

natural she further develops the theory of the relationship between body and soul by comparing the achievement of immortality to the erection of a house.

"The props assist the house
Until the house is built,
And then the props withdraw--
And adequate, erect,
The house supports itself;
Ceasing to recollect
The auger and the carpenter.
Just such a retrospect
Hath the perfected life,
A past of plank and nail,
And slowness,--then the scaffolds drop--
Affirming it a soul."
(230, xxvi)

One of the most vital experiences in life is expressed with intellectual imagination in terms of a commonplace activity. The parallel between the two experiences is worked out with precision and detachment, emotion completely subjugated to the image.

The problem of immortality--intangible, evanescent, tantalizing--she expresses in a manner that conveys all of the perplexity and uncertainty attached to it mingled with an intuitive trust that defies proof.

"My Wheel is in the dark,--
I cannot see a spoke,
Yet know its dripping feet
Go round and round.

My foot is on the tide--
An unfrequented road,
Yet have all roads
A 'clearing' at the end.

Some have resigned the loom,
Some in the busy tomb
Find quaint employ,
Some with new, stately feet
Pass royal through the gate,
Flinging the problem back at you and me."
(227, xvii)

The imagery in the first two stanzas expresses the anxiety of traveling interminably through unfamiliar territory in search of a goal constantly moving out of reach despite all assurances of its location. The silence of those who have gone before intensifies the problem without helping to solve it.

From direct observation, rather than from scientific data, she notes the evidence of divinity in natural phenomena.

"The Moon upon her fluent route
Defiant of a road,
The stars Etruscan argument,
Substantiate a God."

If Aims impel these Astral Ones,
The Ones allowed to know,
Know that which makes them as forgot
As Dawn forgets them now."
(242, lix)

The clear-cut images of the initial stanza are succeeded by rhetoric as subtle and involved as John Donne's ingenious evolutions of thought.

More objectively she defines the concept of heaven as a state of mind subject to individual interpretation.

"Heaven is so far of the mind
That were the mind dissolved,
The site of it by architect
Could not again be proved.

'Tis vast as our capacity
As fair as our idea,
To him of adequate desire
No further 'tis than Here."
(330, xcvii)

With complete detachment she apprehends the tenuous nature of the conception of heaven with brevity and clarity. The limitations imposed upon the abstract terms used to elaborate her definition serve the dual purpose of presenting a restricted as well as an unlimited view of eternity.

A very delightful and definite affirmation of faith is developed through the use of negative statements.

"I never saw a moor,
I never saw the sea;
Yet know I how the heather looks,
And what a wave must be.

I never spoke with God,
Nor visited in heaven;
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the chart were given."
(163, xvii)

The analogy drawn between conclusions derived from observation of familiar experiences and the problem of the supernatural is expressed in balanced structure and developed through the use of negative statements. The contrast between the negative and positive statements serves to make the conclusion more effective.

Paradoxically she admits that in spite of our beliefs in the glory of immortality,

"The Maker's cordial visage,
However good to see,

Is shunned, we must admit it,
Like an adversity."
(43, xcii)

In the childish manner adopted in several poems related to eternity, she objects to Paradise,

"Because it's Sunday all the time
And recess never comes,
And Eden'll be so lonesome
Bright Wednesday afternoons."

The conception of a heaven as dull and austere as a nineteenth century New England Sunday repels her, but the uncompromising doctrines impressed upon her at home and in church compel obedience because

" . . . there's the Judgment Day!"
(295, xxxvii)

In contrast is her assurance that all terrestrial problems will be solved in heaven.

"Christ will explain each separate anguish
In the fair schoolroom of the sky."
(174, xxxix)

Conrad Aiken notes:

> "But perhaps the clearest revelation of her perfect metaphysical detachment is in the following poem from 'The Single Hound.'[1]

"'Heavenly Father', take to Thee
The supreme iniquity,
Fashioned by Thy candid hand
In a moment contraband.

---

[1] Aiken, Conrad, editor, Selected Poems By Emily Dickinson, (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1924), Preface, p. 16.

Though to trust seem to us
More respectful--'we are dust.'
We apologize to Thee
For Thine own Duplicity."
(258, cii)

With the same impersonal detachment she calmly condemns the very human frailty of God.

"God is indeed a jealous God,
He cannot bear to see
That we had rather not with Him
But with each other play."
(BM, 584)

More reverently John Donne expresses the same idea.

" . . . . As thou
Art jealous, Lord, so I am jealous now,
Thou lov'st not, till from loving more, thou free
My soule."
(G, 91)

Ironically she scrutinizes the doctrines instilled in her youth.

"Is Heaven a physician?
They say that He can heal;
But medecine posthumous
Is unavailable.

Is Heaven an exchequer?
They speak of what we owe;
But that negotiation
I'm not a party to."
(24, xlvii)

By means of rhetorical question and terse commentary, age-old teachings are subjected to a piercing examination and curtly nullified.

The same impersonal detachment is present in her caustic acknowledgement of the actuality of heaven.

"Of heaven above the firmest proof
We fundamental know,
Except for its marauding hand,
It had been heaven below."
(202, ciii)

In her apprehension of the dual nature of time she reveals a keen intellectual grasp of fundamental values and a skill in expressing her observations with a minimum of detail and in language stripped of all but essentials.

"Two lengths has every day,
Its absolute extent--
And area superior
By hope or heaven lent."

Miss Sergeant points out that in the remaining lines " . . . lovers of literary 'influence' might find echoes of Donne's rhetoric and abstract vocabulary."[1]

"Eternity will be
Velocity, or pause,
At fundamental signals
From fundamental laws.
To die, is not to go--
On doom's consummate chart
No territory new is staked,
Remain thou as thou art."
(232, xxxii)

Eternity is interpreted in terms of the finite, mathematical figures again being used to develop the concept of infinity..

"Time feels so vast
That were it not for an Eternity,

---

[1] Sergeant, Elizabeth Shipley, "An Early Imagist", *The New Republic*, 4:54, August, 1915.

I fear me this Circumference
Engross my Finity.

To his exclusion,
Who prepares by rudiments of size
For the stupendous volume
Of his Diameters."
(391, xxvi)

Circumference here is used in the dual sense of a radiating out that emphasizes the vastness of time and of an enclosing that precludes infinity. The intellectual imagination of the poet has expressed the emotion with an objectivity and clarity comparable to that of the metaphysical poets.

Sydney R. McLean comments that while

> "Emily Dickinson was declaring, 'Time feels so vast,' Vaughan, in the seventeenth century, wrote:
>
> 'I saw Eternity the other night
> Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
> All calm, as it was bright.'
>
> And, two hundred years later, Emily Dickinson, also beholding eternity, said:
>
> 'I saw no way, the Heavens were stitched,
> I felt the columns close,
> The Earth reversed her hemispheres,
> I touched the Universe.
>
> And back it slid--and I alone,
> A speck upon a ball,
> Went out upon Circumference--
> Beyond the dip of bell!"[1]

In direct contrast to the feeling of vastness expressed above is this dramatic conception of finite compression,

---

[1] McLean, Sydney R., "Emily Dickinson", Mount Holyoke Alumnae Quarterly, 19: 222, February, 1936.

yielding to the spaciousness of infinity. The apprehension of the infinite as expressed in this poem is one of the most successful metaphysical pronouncements of Emily Dickinson, both in phraseology and in interpretation.

In meditating upon the problems of eternity, Emily Dickinson's interpretations varied, as with all subjects pondered upon, according to time and mood. At times they were conversational and colloquial, but at others, impersonal and objective. Sometimes they were filled with assurance, but at other times, frankly skeptical. Yet regardless of her mood she has succeeded in translating infinity in terms of finite experience.

Life is not a prelude to, but an incident in, eternity.

"The blunder is to estimate,--
'Eternity is Then,'
We say, as of a station.
Meanwhile he is so near,
He joins me in my ramble,
Divides abode with me,
No friend have I that so persists
As this Eternity."
(227, xvi)

The personification of Eternity as an omnipresent, neighborly force is presented in colloquial style. The casual style and simplicity of the imagery combine to give the impression of familiarity and intimacy.

Her analytical mind coupled with her intellectual imagination pictures eternity as a continuation of finite time.

"Forever is composed of Nows--
'Tis not a different time,
Except for infiniteness
And latitude of home.

From this, experienced here,
Remove the dates to these,
Let months dissolve in further months,
And years exhale in years.

Without certificate or pause
Or celebrated days,
As infinite our years would be
As Anno Domini's."
(287, xxii)

The analysis of eternity in terms of familiar time is accomplished by a logical progression of chronological divisions. The conclusion is linked to the original premise, completing the illusion of an unbroken succession of events.

In a skeptical moment, she presents eternity as a dubious possibility, its elusiveness emphasized by the imagery.

"'Tis whiter than an Indian pipe,
'Tis dimmer than a lace;
No stature has it, like a fog,
When you approach the place.

Not any voice denotes it here,
Or intimates it there;
A spirit, how doth it accost?
What customs hath the air?

This limitless hyperbole
Each one of us shall be;
'Tis drama if (hypothesis)
It be not tragedy!"
(201, c)

The elaboration of comparisons as tenuous as eternity is intensified by the use of negative affirmations and rhetorical questions. The practical comments make the unsubstantial

nature suggested by the first metaphors even more improbable and lead to the skeptical implications of the conclusion. The use of the negative emphasizes the disbelief of the sceptic and the sensation of an unlimited void.

A parallel is drawn between man's organization and that of eternity to express the apprehension of eternity in terms of daily life.

"Great streets of silence led away
To neighborhoods of pause,
Here was no notice, no dissent,
No universe, no laws.

By clocks 'twas morning, and for night
The bells at distance called;
But epoch had no basis here,
For period exhaled."
(93, lxxvii)

The imagery produces an overwhelming sensation of infinite space and silence. The negative is again used to strengthen the feeling of vast emptiness; the subtraction of human activity leaves a greater emptiness than a multiplication of details would have accomplished.

In abstract terms the conception of the infinite is presented as a negation of human sorrow.

"Not so the infinite relations.
Below
Division is adhesion's forfeit.
On high
Affliction but a speculation,
And woe
A fallacy, a figment
We knew."
(BM, 419)

Perception of the infinite is conveyed in more subtle fashion through suggestion and implication rather than direct statement. Her ability to comprehend the abstract and to express it in concise, clear-cut language, stripped of all but essential detail, as starkly unemotional as New England granite, is exemplified in these lines.

More often, however, she chooses to interpret the abstract in terms of the familiar, developing the concept of eternity by analogy.

> "As if the sea should part
> And show a further sea--
> And that a further, and the three
> But a presumption be
> Of periods of seas
> Unvisited of shores--
> Themselves the verge of seas to be--
> Eternity is these."
> (374, clxxiv)

The elaboration of the initial image by means of a mathematical progression intensified by the imagination conveys the sensation of limitless space. The variation in the length of the lines accentuates the feeling of a regular and continuous amplification of time and space.

CONCLUSION

The passionate intensity predominant in the love poems and revealed to a lesser extent in those on death is subordinated, for the most part, to the intellectual detachment with which the problems of eternity are considered. Personal emo-

tion is absorbed by the immensity and universality of the problem.

In "This world is not conclusion" passionate intensity is subjected to the intellectual analysis of the mystery in its various aspects. It flashes briefly from the concluding stanza of the "The Soul's superior instants", but for the most part is absorbed in the calmness of the account. It is expressed more vividly in "The soul's distinct connection" because of the unexpected force of the simile. "Did our Best Moment last" conceals intensity in the matter-of-fact recital but permits a glimpse to break through in the reference to "the dazzled Soul".

Passionate intensity vibrates throughout each line of "For each ecstatic instant" in spite of the impersonal and epigrammatic phraseology. "I never saw a moor" concludes with a positive declaration of faith, while "I never felt at home below" (295, xxxvii) expresses defiance restrained by an irrational fear.

More than any other poem in this group except "For each ecstatic instant", "I saw no way, the Heavens were stitched" expresses the overwhelming emotion of a soul awed by momentary contact with the infinite.

Just as passionate intensity is expressed in general rather than in personal, terms, so the intellectual analysis of emotion is restricted to an impersonal interpretation of

man's conception of eternity.

"Must be a woe" is a brief analysis of Emily Dickinson's philosophy of compensation. "Did our Best Moment last" presents, in an impersonal manner, her conclusions concerning those rare moments of supernatural happiness granted to humans. "Heaven is so far of the mind" extracts the essence of man's conception of heaven and expresses it in form universal in its application. "My Wheel is in the dark" is an expression of man's bewildered efforts to substantiate his beliefs.

"Two lengths has every day" is a clear-cut analysis of her conception of time. "Forever is composed of Nows" and "'Tis whiter than an Indian pipe" present conflicting analyses of her attempts to apprehend infinity. Equally impersonal is "As if the sea should part" which also describes eternity.

In spite of the impersonal and intellectual manner in which these observations are presented, various moods are discernible in the widely differing points of view presented in this group of poems. Predominant is the perpetual fascination which the mystery of eternity held for Emily Dickinson recorded in its many and various aspects.

The contemplative and subjective moods of "The Soul's superior instants" and "The soul's distinct connection" is balanced by the intellectual and impersonal detachment of the observations in "The props assist the house". The confusion

resulting from unsubstantiated beliefs is expressed in "My Wheel is in the dark"; unshaken confidence in immortality in "I never saw a moor". "The Maker's cordial visage" is a practical observation of human inconsistency, while "I never felt at home below" expresses her reaction to her early religious training.

In "'Heavenly Father,' take to thee" and "God is indeed a jealous God" she adopts the critical attitude of the impartial observer. Ironic introspection appears in "Is Heaven a physician?" "I saw no way, the Heavens were stitched" conveys a feeling of awe at the insignificance of man and the immensity of the universe. The familiarity of "The blunder is to estimate" becomes frank skepticism in "'Tis whiter than an Indian pipe".

Parallels have been drawn between the work of Emily Dickinson and that of Donne, Herbert, Marvell, and Vaughan. In her preoccupation with the problem of the relationship of man to God and of the apprehension of infinity, her work approaches that of Vaughan, who has "a wider consciousness of separation, a veil between the human soul and that Heaven which is its true home"[1] more closely than that of the other metaphysical poets.

---

[1] Grierson, op. cit., p. xlv.

Emily Dickinson's speculations on eternity are intensely personal, rarely disturbed by the consciousness that her conclusions did not coincide with orthodox beliefs of the time. The religious poetry of the metaphysical writers, on the other hand, is an intensely personal record of the struggle of the soul to achieve spiritual emancipation in submission to the will of God by renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil. The constant preoccupation with sin and a sense of guilt which pervades the poetry of Donne and Herbert does not appear in that of Emily Dickinson. The metaphysical poets worship God with all reverence; Emily Dickinson regards Him as an equal and criticizes Him as freely as she would any friend. Erudite language and frequent reference to Catholic doctrine and philosophy are common in metaphysical poetry; Emily Dickinson prefers simple language and familiar imagery.

Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, and Crashaw sought spiritual satisfaction in service to God in the priesthood or in acceptance of formal religion; Emily Dickinson found spiritual satisfaction in meditation in solitude. Therein lies the fundamental difference in their poetic expression.

Her similarity to the religious poetry of the metaphysical poets seems to lie in her ability to express her apprehension of the infinite with intellectual imagination and in rhetoric, sometimes abstract and involved to the point of being obscure, sometimes expressed with a clarity and precision that rivals the most ingenious developments of argument of the most able of the metaphysical poets.

CHAPTER V

"BRIGHT ORTHOGRAPHY"

In style, as well as in content, the poetry of Emily Dickinson has characteristics similar to those of metaphysical poetry. In order to make comparisons between the two, this chapter will consider (1) the sources of her imagery and (2) the forms in which she preferred to express her thoughts, chiefly metaphor, argument, paradox and epigram.

I. Sources of Imagery

It was the desire of the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century "to approximate poetic to direct, unconventional, colloquial speech"[1] in both imagery and verse. Sometimes "these vivid, simple realistic touches are too quickly merged in learned and fantastic elaborations"[2] as in the case of Donne, but in general they breathed new life into English poetry stifled by the strained and sugary conceits and conventional forms characteristic of late Elizabethan poetry.

Two hundred years later Emily Dickinson chose as a medium of expression an idiom that is the essence of New England, New England in all its many aspects: town and field, home

---

[1] Grierson, op. cit., p. xxii.

[2] Grierson, ibid.

and shop, school and church. Her sources were unlimited; every person and every thing with which she came in contact was a potential source of expression. This analysis is not an exhaustive tabulation of her figures of speech, but it does indicate the variety and catholicity of her imagery.

The household tasks which occupied so much of her time furnished inspiration for many vivid expressions. Summer was brushed away "as housewives do a fly", months would be wound in balls and put away, outgrown love packed in drawers like discarded garments, life tossed aside as casually as a rind. Readjustments after death were likened to "sweeping up the heart/And putting love away." Spices suggested other comparisons, as did wine and cooling drinks. Such homely tasks as planting seeds, carrying in sticks for the fireplace, smoothing aches and pains, and mending worn garments served to interpret intense emotion and philosophical reflection. The sound of "the living clock" and the noise of children at play gave rise to other comparisons.

The New Englander's penchant for bargaining is reflected in several poems, notably in "I took one draught of life" (345, cxx). His insatiable curiosity about neighbor and stranger serves as the basis of a characterization of death (260, cvi). A balloon ascension is turned to good account in describing the ecstasy of love. Stumbling along a path in the dark serves to describe recovery from shock and to explain

belief in immortality. The excitement of an excursion to the picnic grounds or a trip to Northampton to hear Jenny Lind is transmitted to imaginative journeys to immortality.

Clothes are mentioned in a symbolic sense: "bonnet of everlasting lace," "the sod gown," "moment of brocade," and "overcoat of clay".

The various occupations and professions of her fellow townsmen were an inexhaustible source of imagery. Building furnished the detailed description of the evolution of the soul in "The props assist the house" (230, xxvi) and frequent references to the "plummet strain". Breath was forced in "as staples driven through". "A single screw of flesh" was "all that pins the soul" this side eternity. Words struck "like hammers". Masonry is used in commenting upon the stiffness of the corpse: "To joint this agate were a feat Outstaring masonry". Plumbing probably caused her comments on "the soldered mouth" and later the eye. From the smithy came the suggestion to "file this mortal off". Ideals are "the fairy oil with which we help the wheel". Autumn is the "Dyer of a distant tree". The presence of the new railroad gave rise to references to freight. Household industries were the source of figures based upon weaving and sewing.

References to the professions are frequent. Heaven is referred to as a physician and as an exchequer. The

architect is mentioned in connection with the location of heaven. Sculpture is the basis of a description of the numbing effects of pain. Doubtless her trips to Boston to the oculist were the source of the ingenious figure of "compound vision" by which death is "convex and concave witness" of time and eternity.

Many of the terms that are used are derived from legal phraseology, doubtless common expressions in a household in which both father and son were prominent lawyers. Notable in the poems of love and of time and eternity are the following: affidavit, bars, bondage, cell, charter, codicil, death warrant, election, equity, imprisonment, legacies, prison, repeal, seal, sentence, titledeed, and veto.

A number of images are based upon expressions of religious significance: baptized, Calvary, sealed church, commune, cross, crucificial, crucifixion, election, Gethsemane, God, grace, Holy Ghost, judgement-seat, litanies, prayer, profaned, revelations, sacrament, sacramental wine, Sunday, troth, and vision.

Emily Dickinson enjoyed school thoroughly, and this is reflected in many of her metaphors. The world is "just the primer to a life", her "A B C". Her lover's words break "in bright orthography", their plight is "printed in tender solemn alphabet", "the whole of love" is learned as a child learns to read

"The alphabet, the words,
A chapter, then the mighty book."
(BM, 260)

She objects to heaven because "Recess never comes", but also adds that Christ will explain all our troubles "in the fair schoolroom of the sky".

The exact and unimaginative mathematical formulae in which she had been so well grounded at Amherst Academy and later at Mount Holyoke Seminary served to present the most abstract ideas accurately and concisely. A new equation will be given in heaven, death is a "bisecting messenger", lovers are "hesitating Fractions". Ratio is used to indicate the suddenly increased value of departed friends and the disproportionate cost of ecstasy. Eternity is a problem before which her "ciphers slip away". Circumference is used to indicate a vast expanse of space or eternity. God "prepares by rudiments of size For the stupendous volume of his Diameters." The simple arithmetic of the elementary school appears in

"One and One are One
Two be finished using
Well enough for schools."
(356, cxl)

and also in

"Subtract thyself in play
And not enough of me
Is left to put away."
(351, cxxxi)

Geography is another source of imagery. The following words appear frequently: astral, continents, firmaments, headlands, hemispheres, inland, latitude, moon, mountains, peninsular, polar, sea, seasons, solstice, south, stars, sun,

universe, west, and zone. Specific geographical locations are also used the Alps, Himmaleh, Cordillera, Apennines, North America, Chimbarazu, the Baltic, the Caspian, Peru, the Indies, Mount Etna, and Amherst, among others.

Polar and West are used frequently in symbolic manner. Polar is used in the sense of being segregated from others as in

"That polar privacy
A Soul admitted to Itself:
Finite Infinity."
(229, xxv)

and

"A steadfast south upon the soul
Her polar time behind."
(420, lxxiv)

Andrew Marvell also uses the term but to indicate the separation of lovers.

"And therefore her Decrees of Steel
Us as the distant Poles have plac'd."
(G, 78)

West is used as synonymous with eternity in the same sense in which Donne uses it. Emily Dickinson says:

"That great water in the west
Termed immortality."
(215, cxxxiv)

"In the silent west
Many sails at rest,
. . . .
. . . . Eternity!"
(219, cxli)

John Donne's lines have a more personal connotation.

"I am carryed towards the West
This day, when my Soules forme bends the East."
(G, 89)

"I joy, that in these straits, I see my West."
(G, 92)

Noon symbolizes radiant joy in achievement of a goal.

"I had been hungry all the years;
My noon had come, to dine."
(36, lxxvi)

"Consciousness is noon."
(BM, 417)

The intense interest in the geographical and scientific discoveries of the seventeenth century is reflected in the poetry of the period. Several of Donne's most elaborate conceits are based on geographical facts.

"My face in thine eye, thine in mine appeares,
And true plaine hearts doe in the faces rest,
Where can we finde two better hemispheares
Without sharpe North, without declining West?"
(G, 1)

Emily Dickinson uses the term more literally.

"Earth reversed her hemispheres.
I touched the Universe."
(386, xxi)

Richard Crashaw reveals the current interest in astrology.

"Shee consults the conscious Spheares,
To calculate her young sons yeares."
(G, 51)

Emily Dickinson refers to eternity.

"There is a zone whose even years
No solstice interrupt."
(Bm, 417)

Thomas Carew applies the expression to love.

"Give me more Love, or more Disdain;
The Torrid, or the Frozen Zone

Bring equall ease unto my paine;
The Temperate affords me none."
(G, 33)

From science Emily Dickinson derives

"The chemical conviction
That naught be lost."
(BM, 396)

She, like the metaphysical poets, also uses the term atom as synonymous with soul.

"Behold the atom I preferred
To all the lists of clay."
(137, xix)

John Donne speaks more directly in "The Extasie".

"For, th'Atomies of which we grow,
Are soules, whom no change can invade."
(G, 17)

In a more scientific sense John Hall says:

"Since that this thing we call the world
By chance on Atomes is begot."
(G, 64)

Frequently Miss Dickinson mentions parts of the body: arm, artery, blood, brain, eye, ear, feet, fingers, fists, hair, hand, heart, mouth, nerve, sinew.

As a lover and keen observer of nature in its many aspects, she frequently used its phenomena to interpret the supernatural or, in other groups of poems, she simply recorded its beauties as only an imagist could do. In these poems, she used the following words, many of them more than once: bee, birds, cricket, fly, whippoorwill, eagle, deer, hound, brook, desert, ocean, river, sea, land, mountain, desert,

sand, berry, bloom, heather, Indian pipe, jasmines, kernel, rose, seed, crescent, moon, stars, sun, cloud, dew, dawn, fog, frost, lightning, rainbow, snow, storm, thunder, and wind.

In referring to death she mentions coffin, crape, funeral, grave, mourners, ribbon, service, spade, and tomb.

To convey the idea of solidity she used the following terms, particularly in connection with grief or death: adamant, agate, alabaster, lead, marble, quartz, and lead.

> "(The corpse) made no signal, nor demurred,
> But dropped like adamant."
> (235, lxxxix)

John Donne refers to adamant, in the obsolete sense, as a lodestone.

> "And thou like Adamant draw mine iron heart."
> (G, 85)

In "A Dialogue betwixt God and the Soul" signed Ignoto, it is used in the sense of being unbreakable.

> "But Lord! what if I turn againe,
> And with an adamantine chain,
> Lock me to thee?"
> (G, 95)

Films, fog, gauze, sands, and shadows are used to convey the effect of elusiveness or unsubstantiality.

Cobweb, cuticle, borer and rust are indicative of decay. John Donne prays that God will

> "Burne off my rusts, and my deformity,
> Restore thine Image."
> (G, 90)

Ethereal effects are produced by use of the following: down, eider, gossamer, fog, lace, and moth.

To emphasize the momentous quality of her love, she chose regal words: coronation, coronet, crown, czar, diadem, doges, dominion, duke, dynasty, earl, emperor, empress, imperial, kingdom, majesty, monarch, monarchy, prince, queen, rank, royal, sovereign, title, and throne. Of her self she says,

"Title divine is mine
. . . .
Empress of Calvary.
Royal all but the
Crown--"
(154, lvii)

John Donne also likens lovers to monarchs:

"Here upon earth, we'are Kings, and none but wee
Can be such Kings, nor of such subjects bee."
(G, 8)

"She'is all States, and all Princes, I,
Nothing else is."
(G, 3)

In her references to the relationship of soul and body, Emily Dickinson has used imagery which closely resembles that used by the metaphysical poets. Frequently the soul is described as prisoner of the flesh.

"The soul's retaken moments
When, felon, led along
With shackles on the plumed feet
And rivets in the song."
(BM, 473)

Andrew Marvell gives a more elaborate description, quoted in part.

"O who shall, from this Dungeon, raise
A Soul inslav'd so many wayes?
With Bolts of Bones, that fetter'd stands
In feet; and manacled in hands."
(G, 163)

In contemplation of reunion with her lover in heaven, she says:

> "Before the judgment-seat of God,
> The last and second time
> These fleshless lovers met."
> (135, xv)

Richard Lovelace makes a similar comment:

> "Above the highest sphere wee meet
> Unseene, unknowne, and greet as Angels greet.
> . . . .
> . . . like spirits unconfin'd
> In Heav'n, their earthy bodies left behind."
> (G, 58)

II. STYLE

Careful examination of her poetry reveals that Emily Dickinson's favorite medium of expression was the metaphor. Her genius for expressing abstract and complex ideas in terms of simple and commonplace things and experiences is unique whether she reduces her concept to the terse brevity of definition or elaborates it with all the skill and ingenuity of a Donne.

Emily Dickinson observed everything and every one with whom she came in contact and recorded her observations as accurately and as impersonally as a scientist, extracting the quintessence of the idea with surgical precision and expressing it as laconically as a Vermont farmer and as concisely as a metaphysical poet. In her analysis of emotion, she frequently voices the intrinsic character of the sensation

with the trenchant brevity of a lexicographer but with dramatic impact obtained by the unexpectedness of the comparison, compressing ideas of universal significance into a few lines.

"Crisis is a hair
Toward which forces creep,
Past which forces retrograde."
(BM, 353)

"Surprise is like a thrilling pungent
Upon a tasteless meat--
Alone too acrid, but combined,
An edible delight."
(BM, 575)

" . . . Calm is but a wall
Of unattempted gauze
An instant push demolishes,
A questioning dissolves."
(BM, 481)

Grief she defines as "a mouse", "a thief", and "a juggler". Thomas Carew says,

"Grief is a puddle, and reflects not clear
Your beauties rayes."
(G, 37)

Henry Vaughan uses a brief definition in considering man and nature.

"Man is the shuttle, to whose winding quest
And passage through these looms
God order'd motion, but ordain'd no rest."
(G, 148)

Although the pages of Emily Dickinson's poetry contain many such pertinent definitions, she often elaborates upon the concise statement of the essence of an idea and presents a detailed analysis, sharp, clear-cut, exact, yet expressed in terms of concrete and familiar objects and experiences.

"Crumbling is not an instant's act,
A fundamental pause;
Delapidation's processes
Are organized decays.

'Tis first a cobweb on the soul,
A cuticle of dust,
A borer in the axis,
An elemental rust.

Ruin is formal, devil's work,
Consecutive and slow--
Fail in an instant no man did,
Slipping is crash's law."
(BM, 509)

In logical fashion she states her argument emphasizing it by the use of negative and positive statements, illustrating it by a rapid accumulation of metaphors, and linking her conclusion to the initial statement.

"A deed knocks first at thought,
And then it knocks at will.
That is the manufacturing spot,
And will at home and well.

It then goes out an act,
Or is entombed so still
That only to the ear of God
Its doom is audible."
(32, lxvii)

Personification and metaphor are here combined to analyze the steps in the development of action. Again there is a logical and clear-cut presentation of the idea, expressed in terms of everyday experience.

In these definitions and analyses, observations are recorded in a straightforward and impersonal manner, devoid of emotion. In other poems, however, she develops her

metaphor with an ingenuity and imagination comparable to that of the metaphysical poets, sustaining the comparison throughout several stanzas. Among the most noteworthy of these are "He put the belt around my life" and "I make his crescent fill or lack"which were discussed in Chapter II. George F. Whicher notes that "My life had stood a loaded gun" is:

> "A poem that contains one of the most astonishing 'metaphysical' images that Emily Dickinson ever conceived, an image equivalent in its unexpectedness and ingenious elaboration to Donne's famous comparison of two lovers to a pair of compasses."[1]

"My life had stood a loaded gun
In corners, till a day
The owner passed--identified,
And carried me away.
. . . .
And when at night, our good day done,
I guard my master's head,
'Tis better than the eider duck's
Deep pillow to have shared.

To foe of his I'm deadly foe,
None stir the second time
On whom I lay a yellow eye
Or an emphatic thumb.

Though I than he may longer live,
He longer must than I,
For I have but the art to kill--
Without the power to die."
(349, cxxviii)

The metaphor is sustained throughout the poem, skillfully interweaving the human and figurative elements, but concluding with a paradoxical and enigmatic declaration.

---

[1] Whicher, op. cit., p. 278.

Another poem in which the image is ingeniously sustained throughout compares the heart to a clock.

"A clock stopped--not the mantel's;
Geneva's farthest skill
Can't put the puppet bowing
That just now dangled still.

An awe came on the trinket!
The figures hunched with pain,
Then quivered out of decimals
Into degreeless noon.

It will not stir for doctors,
This pendulum of snow;
The shopman importunes it,
While cool, concernless No

Nods from the gilded pointers,
Nods from the seconds slim,
Decades of arrogance between
The dial life and him."
(215, cxxxv)

In this elaborate evolution of an intrinsically simple figure, Emily Dickinson has equalled the ingenious development of the metaphysical poets. The image has been worked out as methodically as Donne developed his extravagant conception of a tear as the globe in "A Valediction: of weeping".

"So doth each teare,
Which thee doth weare,
A globe, yea world by that impression grow,
Till thy teares mixt with mine doe overflow
This world, by waters sent from thee, my heaven dissolved so."
(G, 11)

"A solemn thing within the soul" (BM, 472) is a simple but detailed comparison of the development of the soul to the harvesting of an orchard. The description of

the ripening of the fruit and the activity in the orchard at harvest time is thoroughly New England in essence, yet the human element is woven into the figure subtly and unobtrusively. It lacks the startling extravagance of Donne's comparison of the body to a map in "Hymne to God my God in my distresse" (G, 91), but is as effective in its quiet simplicity and realistic touches.

In "There came a day at summer's full",[1] the separation of the lovers was described through the use of religious symbolism. In a highly imaginative style Donne also uses religious phraseology in visualizing himself as "love's martyr" and the wreath of hair about his arm as a sacred relic in "The Funerall" (G, 18).

Less elaborate but equally ingenious in conception is the short poem in which thought is compared to a train.

> "The brain within its groove
> Runs evenly and true;
> But let a splinter swerve,
> 'Twere easier for you
> To put the water back
> When floods have slit the hills.
> And scooped a turnpike for themselves,
> And blotted out the mills!"
> (14, xxvi)

Like the metaphysical poets Emily Dickinson discovered that paradox was one of the most effective means of revealing truths in facts seemingly contradictory, actually complementary. By placing apparently conflicting ideas in juxtaposi-

---

[1] Chapter II, p.23.

tion, fundamental truths appeared with greater clarity and distinctness than if viewed directly. She believed that one should:

"Tell all the truth but tell it slant,
Success in circuit lies."
(BM, 449)

With characteristic consistency, she has followed this concept in her poetry. Many of her reflections are epigrammatic in their brevity.

"To die without the dying
And live without the life--
This is the hardest miracle
Propounded to belief."
(BM, 328)

"Much madness is divinest sense
To a discerning eye;
Much sense the starkest madness."
(7, xi)

Some of her remarks are very like those of metaphysical poets.

"So well that I can live without--
I love Thee."
(362, cli)

Richard Lovelace made a similar remark in "To Lucasta, Going to the Warres" (G, 58).

"I could not love thee (Deare) so much,
Lov'd I not Honour more."

While her use of paradox was at times so sharply chiseled and concise that it was gnomic in effect, at others it was developed by a clever succession of parallelisms and antitheses sustained throughout several lines in rhetoric as

involved and ingenious as that of John Donne.

"If recollecting were forgetting
Then I remember not;
And if forgetting, recollecting,
How near I had forgot!
And if to miss were merry,
And if to mourn were gay
How very blithe the fingers
That gathered these today!"
(49, cviii)

This delightful bit of fancy has a distinct seventeenth century flavor that recalls the ingenious phrasing of the metaphysical poets. John Donne was especially adept at this style of writing.

"There I should see a Sunne, by rising set
And by that setting endlesse day beget."
(G, 89)

"Thou canst not every day give mee thy heart,
If thou canst give it, then thou never gavest it;
Loves riddles are, that though thy heart depart
It stayes at home, and thou with losing savest it."
(G, 5)

Still another example of this type of involved and argumentative paradox is the following:

"A death-blow is a life-blow to some
Who, till they died, did not alive become;
Who had they lived, had died, but when
They died, vitality begun."
(177, xlvi)

It is noteworthy that Emily Dickinson expressed her thoughts with brevity and laconism, sometimes to the point of being cryptic and obscure. Connecting words and even those ordinarily considered essential were omitted it not absolutely necessary to convey her meaning. Ideas of tremendous import

were packed into a few terse lines; infinity was compressed into a quatrain. This talent for crystallizing abstract ideas in compact form produced a number of epigrams. Like her other poetry, however, these are expressed in terms of the concrete and the commonplace.

"Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed.
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need."
(3, i)

In brief, extremely simple language she has explicitly stated a recognized fact, emphasizing it by the unexpectedness of the negative.

In later life Emily Dickinson pondered a great deal about the elusiveness of fame. Several of her observations have been stated in epigrammatic form, one of which follows.

"Fame is the tint that scholars leave
Upon their setting names--
The iris not of occident
That disappears as comes."
(BM, 459)

Instead of the clear-cut, metaphorical definition which she preferred, she sometimes expressed her thoughts in more symbolic and pictorial form.

"When Etna basks and purrs,
Naples is more afraid
Than when she shows her Garnet Tooth;
Security is loud."
(224, vii)

The geographical error is forgotten in the effectiveness of the conceit. Again she has expressed the intangible

in terms of common experience, dramatically compressing significant observation into a few brief lines.

Like Donne, Emily Dickinson frequently produces dramatic effect by an abrupt introduction which gives the effect of an interrupted conversation and suggests the setting briefly but vividly.

"Me! Come! My dazzled face
In such a shining place!"
(204, cviii)

The short exclamations imply the breathless astonishment aroused by the unexpected invitation while the choice of adjectives suggests the brilliance of eternity. George Herbert describes a more hesitant approach to heavenly joy.

"Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back."
(G, 115)

"Step lightly on this narrow spot!" (176, xliv) makes one visualize a scene in the cemetery, the peremptory command causing the careless companion to draw back as he is about to cross the grave. Donne often uses a similar device to shock the reader into attention.

"For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love."[1]

The challenging effect of an unexpected introduction is a clever device to gain immediate attention. Personification of abstract ideas or of inanimate objects enables the writer to maintain the dramatic effect throughout the poem.

---

[1] Whiting, op. cit., p. 565.

"The mind lives on the heart
Like any parasite;
If that be full of meat
The mind is fat."
(BM, 433)

Keen observation is translated in terms of common experience, the use of personification giving it a dramatic quality. Equally effective is the portrayal of a soul suffering from shock.

"The soul has bandaged moments
When too appalled to stir."
(BM, 473)

This ability to describe the abstract and the soul-shaking in terms of the commonplace enables the poet to present her observations with a dramatic impact enhanced by the unexpectedness of the comparison and the contrast of the simplicity of the image with the vital and often complex idea expressed. Death is personified in various ways: "the supple suitor", "the postponeless messenger", a marauder, and a brigand. George Herbert gives a very homely picture of Death's entrance.

"Sometimes Death, puffing at the doore,
Blows all the dust about the floore."
(G, 108)

Donne rebukes the too inquisitive sun.

"Busie old foole, unruly Sunne,
. . . .
Saucy pedantique wretch . . . "
(G, 3)

"Dust is the only secret" (260, cvi) presents a detailed character sketch of death as an enigmatic stranger of

whose past even the enterprising New Englander has been unable to secure a clue.

The metaphysical poets delighted in the intricate evolutions possible in the development of argument. Emily Dickinson was adept in the use of this form, influenced undoubtedly by father and brother, both successful lawyers. Her procedure was exact and logical. She stated a point of view, accepted or rejected it, substantiated her point of view in clear-cut, methodical fashion, and drew her conclusions, usually with reference to her initial statement to present a well-rounded argument. In this type of poetry her favorite devices, as were those of the metaphysical poets, were the use of balanced structure, parallelisms, antithesis, and negative statements.

"They say that 'time assuages,'--
Time never did assuage;
An actual suffering strengthens,
As sinews do, with age.

Time is a test of trouble,
But not a remedy.
If such it prove, it prove too
There was no malady."
(196, lxxxvi)

The commonly accepted aphorism is sharply contradicted, the poet's emphatic denial illustrated by a simple analogy. The argument is developed by means of balanced structure and contrasting statements expressed with brevity and clarity.

An ingenious, but brief, use of argument appears in the following:

"The Devil, had he fidelity,
Would be the finest friend--
Because he has ability,
But Devils cannot mend.
Perfidy is the virtue
That would he but resign,--
The devil, so amended,
Were durably divine."
(255, xcii)

Although Emily Dickinson did not publish any of her poetry during her lifetime, except for three or four short poems, publication was not so repulsive to her as is commonly thought. She left instructions that her letters be destroyed; she did not order that her poems be destroyed. The fact that many of her poems had been carefully copied and fastened together is indicative of her willingness to submit her work to public approval after her death. She analyzes her feeling toward publication with a view toward earning one's livelihood in the following argument.

"Publication is the auction
Of the mind of man,
Poverty be justifying
For so foul a thing.

Possibly,--but we would rather
From our garret go
White unto the White Creator,
Than invest our snow.

Thought belongs to Him who gave it--
Then to him who bear
Its corporeal illustration.
Sell the Royal air
In the parcel,--be the merchant
Of the Heavenly Grace,
But reduce no human spirit
To disgrace of price!"
(277, ii)

In general the arguments of Emily Dickinson are arranged in clear-cut, logical structure, one point evolving from the preceding with a nice precision and a keen sense of the effect to be derived from juxtaposition of contrasting elements. In clarity and brevity her work differs from the intricate and elaborate arguments of the metaphysical poets developed usually at great length as exemplified in "The Extasie" (G, 16) and "Goodfriday, 1613: Riding Westward" (G, 89) by John Donne.

Very often Emily Dickinson used parallel structure, sometimes to gain emphasis through repetition, sometimes to heighten the desired effect through contrast. This characteristic predominates in argument and in epigram, but is noticeable in other types of poetry as well.

> "To wait an hour is long
> If love be just beyond:
> To wait eternity is short
> If love be at the end."
> (BM, 286)

The arrangement of the epigram in balanced structure developed through antithesis enables the poet to present a paradoxical conception of the flexibility of time. The juxtaposition of apparently contradictory statements brings the indisputable truth of the observation more sharply into focus.

> "The brain is wider than the sky,
> For, put them side by side,
> The one the other will include
> With ease, and you beside.

The brain is deeper than the sea,
For, hold them, blue to blue,
The one the other will absorb,
As sponges, buckets do.

The brain is just the weight of God,
For, lift them, pound for pound,
And they will differ, if they do,
As syllable from sound."
(56, cxxvi)

By a repetition of the structure of the first stanza, each succeeding stanza emphasizes and elaborates the original statement, building up to a dramatic climax.

An example of this use of parallel structure to secure emphasis is to be found in the concluding stanzas of Richard Crashaw's "Loves Horoscope".

"O if Love shall live, o where,
But in her Eye, or in her Eare,
In her Brest, or in her Breath,
Shall I hide poore Love from Death?
For in the life ought else can give,
Love shall dye, although he live.

Or if Love shall dye, o where,
But in her Eye, or in her Eare,
In her Breath, or in her Breast,
Shall I Build his funerall Nest?
While Love shall thus entombed lye,
Love shall live, although he dye."
(G, 52)

Emily Dickinson realized that contradictory forces enhanced, rather than neutralized, one another. Because of this she realized that the positive is often more dramatic if stated in the negative, that subtraction produces greater awareness of value than multiplication.

"Not with a club the heart is broken,
Nor with a stone;

A whip, so small you could not see it,
  I've known

To lash the magic creature
  Till it fell."
(151, 1)

The use of the negative arouses interest; the contrast that follows so swiftly enforces it.

Air is described through an accumulation of negations.

"Air has no residence, no neighbor,
No ear, no door,
No apprehension of another--
Oh, happy air!"
(BM, 562)

John Donne uses the negative to reassure his love of his devotion.

"Sweetest love, I do not goe,
  For wearinesse of thee,
Nor in hope the world can show
  A fitter Love for mee."
(G, 5)

Thomas Stanley develops his argument in similar style.

"Not that by this disdain
  I am releas'd,
And freed from thy tyrannick chain,
  Do I my self think blest;

Not that thy Flame shall burn
  No more; for know
That I shall into ashes turn,
  Before this fire doth so."
(G, 65)

Emily Dickinson's sense of the dramatic suggested that negative introductions aroused interest and developed suspense

"One need not be a chamber to be haunted,
One need not be a house;

The brain has corridors surpassing
Material place."
(188, lxix)

The sense of impending horror aroused by the implications of the first lines is carried out with all the harrowing accompaniments of the conventional ghost story, the personal element increasing the sensation of unescapable doom.

Rapid accumulation of images or more lengthy elaboration of a single figure was a favorite device of the metaphysical poets. This same characteristic can be noted in Emily Dickinson. Sometimes she invoked a swift succession of images through a series of rapidly changing words or phrases. One of her loveliest and most effective descriptions, that of the humming bird, is developed through this method.

"A route of evanescence
With a revolving wheel;
A resonance of emerald,
A rush of cochineal."
(74, xv)

Death she characterizes as

"Industrious, laconic,
Punctual, sedate,
Bolder than a Brigand,
Swifter than a Fleet."
(260, cvi)

John Donne uses this device constantly but with particular effectiveness in "Batter my heart, three person'd God".

" . . . for, you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee, 'and bend
Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new."
(G, 88)

The short line, the broken meter, and the rapid turn of phrase combined to give brilliancy and vitality to the verse, as more conventional forms could not do. Often a dramatic effect is obtained by arranging the series in such a way as to lead to a climax.

Sometimes this effect is obtained by flashing several facets of an image within a few lines. Sometimes images are multiplied throughout the poem in rapid accumulation, each contributing to the development of the final concept.

"Love is like life, merely longer;
Love is like death, daring the grave:
Love is the fellow of the resurrection
Scooping up the dust and chanting 'Live!'"
(BM, 336)

One of the finest examples of her ability to present an idea in all its many phases is her description of grief.

"Grief is a mouse,
And chooses wainscot in the breast
For his shy house,
And baffles quest.

Grief is a thief,
Quick startled, pricks his ear
Report to hear of that vast dark
That swept his being back.

Grief is a juggler,
. . . .

Grief is a gourmand,
Span his luxury.

Best grief is tongueless--"
(BM, 493)

The many-sided aspects of grief have been presented by

means of a series of metaphors gradually built up to a climax, but the analysis has been presented in terms of commonplace experiences.

Andrew Marvell presents a many-sided picture of his mistress in "The Gallery" (G, 75) and multiplies a series of extravagant vows in "To His Coy Mistress" (G, 73). Abraham Cowley describes his disdainful mistress in similar fashion in "The Change" (G, 72).

Conclusion

The metaphysical poets expressed their thoughts in the colorful language of the day, drawing their images from every possible source: land and sea, work and recreation, shop and study, home and church. Two hundred years later Emily Dickinson disregarded the poetic diction approved by her contemporaries to crystallize her observations in terms indigeneous to New England, homely but colorful. Her one concern was that her verse should be alive. To accomplish that she sought in familiar occupations and experiences comparisons by which her observations could be recorded precisely, compactly, and effectively. The result was a collection of poetry New England in expression, universal in concept.

No source was too humble, no experience too inconsequential, to provide concrete illustrations for her innermost speculations. In general Miss Dickinson's imagery is based

upon everyday occurrences: simple household tasks, familiar occupations and professions, school subjects and activities, nature in all its varied aspects. In her use of geographical and mathematical terms, of words relating to royalty, and of references to the relationship of soul and body, she closely approximates the imagery of the metaphysical poets. Specific comparisons have been made between her work and that of Carew, Crashaw, Donne, Hall, Ignoto, Lovelace, and Marvell.

Emily Dickinson preferred the metaphor to any other figure of speech although she used the simile on occasion. Metaphor, however, is predominant both in the brief definitions and in the longer metaphysical elaborations. In her desire to record her observations exactly, she chose to interpret the abstract in terms of the concrete, even of the trivial, condensing her concept into the briefest possible form. The result was a series of definitions, terse but dynamic, often gnomic in expression. These concise statements of fundamental facts were sometimes developed into shrewd scientific analyses of thought or emotion, expressed with a minimum of detail, clear-cut, exact, apt.

More imaginative than these analyses of emotion are the longer and more ingenious elaborations of a simple figure. In her ability to develop a simple metaphor into an elaborate and sustained figure, skillfully interweaving the human and figurative elements, she is comparable to John Donne, but in

general she refrains from the extravagance characteristic of so many of his elaborate conceptions. It is notable, also, that the source of her imagery is fundamentally New England: an apple orchard, a train, a loaded gun. In spite of the ingenuity necessary to sustain such an image effectively, the language remains simple, colloquial, basically New England.

To express the seemingly contradictory facts of life and eternity, Emily Dickinson discovered, as the metaphysical poets had before her, that paradox was the instrument best suited for this task, and paradox is as characteristic of her work as metaphor, the two often combined effectively. As with metaphor, she sometimes used paradox with a brevity epigrammatic in tone. At other times she developed the paradox with a clever manipulation of balanced phrase, antithesis, and repetion that rivaled the rhetorical juggling of the metaphysical poets. In this skillful evolution of involved and argumentative rhetoric she approximates Donne more closely than the others of his contemporaries.

The compactness and brevity of her observations have resulted in a series of epigrams that betray an incredible comprehension of man's thoughts, emotions and perplexities. Usually these are expressed in brief quatrains, but occasionally they are incorporated in longer poems as is true of metaphysical poetry, notably in that of Andrew Marvell.

The use of a colloquial style and a rhythm approximating that of ordinary speech gave dramatic effect to much of the metaphysical poetry. Emily Dickinson also creates this impression by the use of an abrupt introductory line similar to that used by Donne and by personification of abstract ideas and inanimate objects. The short, vivid exclamations and suggestion of action serve to impart the dramatic background in much the same manner used by Donne, Herbert, and others.

The ingenious development of argument in which the metaphysical poets delight appealed to Emily Dickinson's logical mind. Everything which she observed was examined from every angle and her conclusions stated objectively and honestly, analogies drawn from common experience to illustrate her point. Although she delighted in the intricate evolutions possible in the expression of argumentative thought, her observations were made in clear-cut, simple fashion seldom becoming involved or obscure as did many of the metaphysical pronouncements.

In the development of argument she drew upon all the rhetorical devices essential to effective reasoning: parallelism, antithesis, analogy, and repetition. She found that contrast was an effective means of high lighting an observation; therefore she used antithesis freely. Repetition gave emphasis and enabled her to build up her argument to a dramatic

climax. Homely analogies served to interpret the intangible in terms of the familiar. Sometimes one device was used exclusively; more often they were used in combination. Parallel structure formed the framework; antithesis, analogy, repetition and paradox were the tools with which the argument was fashioned. These were also the devices used by her metaphysical predecessors of the seventeenth century.

In one other respect Emily Dickinson's style closely resembles that of the metaphysical poets, particularly that of Donne, and that is in the rapid multiplication of images in breath-taking fashion. At times this is effected by a series of words or phrases, short, challenging, vivid. At others image succeeds image in rapid presentation of the many and varied aspects of complex ideas, synthesized into a brilliant apprehension of the whole concept.

In summary, the style of Emily Dickinson corresponds to that of the metaphysical poets in the following respects:

1. apprehension of thought expressed in brief but apt definition
2. intellectual analysis of thought and emotion
3. ingenious elaboration of metaphor
4. paradoxical presentation of ideas
5. epigrammatic quality
6. dramatic effects obtained by an abrupt introduction and by personification of abstract ideas.
7. ingenious development of argument through the use of parallelism, antithesis, analogy, and repetition
8. development of a concept by a rapid multiplication of images.

CHAPTER VI

"THE BELLS WHOSE JINGLING COOLED MY TRAMP"

In their efforts to reproduce the rhythms of simple, direct speech, the metaphysical poets frequently wrote verse that seemed rough and inharmonious to contemporary ears accustomed to the elaborate diction and exact forms of Elizabethan poetry. Similar criticisms were made of Emily Dickinson's poetry when it was first published. The irregularities of meter and the unconventional rhyme schemes prevalent in her poetry aroused sharp criticism, although the most severe critics recognized that intensity and vivid imagination were contained within this rough exterior. The Boston Courier of November 23, 1890, had the following criticism by Arlo Bates:

> "Had Miss Dickinson possessed the aptitude and the will to learn technical skill, she would have enriched the language with lyrics which would have endured to the end of time, it might well be."[1]

After the publication of Poems, Second Series, an article in The Literary World of December 19, 1891, stated:

> "Again we find the hardly human dumbness, the isolated and singular point of view, the neuralgic darts of feeling voiced in words that are sometimes almost inarticulate, sometimes curiously far-fetched--the rhyme, meter, and

---

[1] Bingham, Millicent Todd, Ancestors' Brocades, second edition, (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1945), p. 74.

vocabulary jarring upon the artistic sense."[1]

In his appraisal of her work Thomas Wentworth Higginson had recommended more careful attention to verse technique, but Mrs. Todd notes:

> "In the more carefully copied poems are many alterations but not one change is made to improve rhyme or rhythm. Every suggestion for a different word or phrase was in the evident hope that by some one of them the thought might be made clearer, and not in a single instance to smooth the form."[2]

In spite of her apparent rejection of all rules relative to poetic form, George F. Whicher, in his analysis of her verse, makes the following observation:

> " . . . Emily Dickinson was both orthodox in her choice of meters, except in a very small number of poems, and skillful in blending the fixed beat of the meter with the free cadences of speech. Her preference was for iambic or trochaic measures and for the four-stress line. More than half of her published poems are written in the familiar ballad stanza, the 'common meter' of the hymn books."[3]

The metaphysical poets had discovered, two centuries before, that the short lines of the ballad and the song could be used more effectively in expressing intense emotion and light fancies than could the longer and more stately lines of the sonnet. Some of these poets experimented with different forms and bizarre arrangements of their verse as exemplified

---

[1] Bingham, _op_. _cit_., p. 175.

[2] Todd, _op_. _cit_., p. 245.

[3] Whicher, op. cit., p. 240.

by Herbert's "Easter Wings" (G, 104) in which the lines are arranged in the shape of wings. There is no trace of such eccentricity in the poetry of Emily Dickinson.

The majority of Emily Dickinson's poems are written in ballad stanza as pointed out by Mr. Whicher, but in ballad stanza marked by variation in meter and rhyme which enabled her to reproduce the inflection of colloquial speech and to impart to her verse an intensity and a vivacity that would have been smothered by meticulous observance of the rules.

One example of her use of the conventional ballad stanza in which both rhyme and meter fulfill the requirements is the following:

"If you were coming in the fall,
I'd brush the summer by
With half a smile and half a spurn,
As housewives do a fly.
(128, vi)

Almost invariably when she uses other forms she chooses those with a shorter line. One form of the quatrain has the first and fourth lines in iambic trimeter, the second and third in iambic dimeter.

"That I did always love,
I bring thee proof:
That till I loved
I did not love enough."
(129, viii)

The short line and monosyllables enable the poet to present her argument more emphatically than would a longer line. Another variation consists entirely of iambic dimeter

which enables the poet to express her emotion with passionate intensity.

"Wild nights! Wild nights!
Were I with thee,
Wild nights should be
Our luxury!"
(141, xxv)

The short foot used here is better suited to the lyric outburst of passionate desire than a longer, more conservative meter would be.

The quatrain is used frequently by the metaphysical poets, but with marked irregularities of meter or variations of form. This is apparent in Donne's "A Valediction: forbidding mourning" (G, 14).

"As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their soules, to goe,
Whilst some of their sad friends doe say,
The breath goes now, and some say, no:"

Lovelace, Stanley, and Marvell also use a stanza based upon iambic tetrameter, but containing trochees, spondees, or other forms to give variety to their verse. George Herbert often inserts a dimeter to secure dramatic effect through contrast.

"Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridall of the earth and skie:
The dew shall weep thy fall to night;
For thou must die."
(G, 109)

"Throw away the rod,
Throw away thy wrath:
O my God,
Take the gentle path."
(G, 113)

Emily Dickinson also uses a short line to attract attention by means of contrast or to give a dramatic sense of finality.

"Uncertain lease develops luster
On time;
Uncertain grasp, appreciation
Of sum."
(BM, 524)

"Somewhat to hope for,
Be it ne'er so far,
Is capital against
Despair."
(BM, 467)

Although the couplet was used occasionally by the metaphysical poets, it was not a favorite form. Thomas Carew uses it in "A Valediction to Life" (G, 175), and Donne, in "Goodfriday, 1613: Riding Westward" (G, 89). Emily Dickinson does not use it often, but "My river runs to thee" (131, xi) is written in couplet stanza, the number of feet decreased in each stanza until the last consists of only two syllables.

The tercet was well suited for the expression of brief thoughts or extensive cataloging of a mistress' charms. Crashaw uses it in "Wishes To his (supposed) Mistresse" (G, 53) and John Cleveland writes "An Elegy on Ben Jonson"(G, 183) in this meter. There are several examples of this form in the poems of Emily Dickinson also.

"Sleep is the station grand
Down which on either hand
The hosts of witness stand!"
(173, xxxviii)

In this stanza the conventional rhyme scheme is carried

out faithfully, but in many of her tercets rhyme is suggested or ignored. A different arrangement of the three-line stanza appears in a little song.

"Poor little heart!
Did they forget thee?
Then dinna care! Then dinna care!"
(148, xiii)

Another form that was a favorite of the metaphysical poets because it lent itself to a variety of arrangements was the sestet. Donne used it in "The Expiration" (G, 23); Carew used the same rhyme scheme, ababcc in "Ingratefull beauty threatned" (G, 35). Henry King uses the same rhyme scheme but a shorter line in "Sonnet" (G, 70). Herbert has a different arrangement in "Life" (G, 110).

There are numerous examples of the sestet in the poems of Emily Dickinson in which the rhyme scheme is more regular than in other forms which she used.

"The daisy follows soft the sun,
And when his golden walk is done,
Sits shyly at his feet.
He, waking, finds the flower near.
"Wherefore, marauder, art thou here?"
"Because, sir, love is sweet!"
(172, xxxiv)

In her use of longer stanzas, which are scattered throughout, she seldom follows accepted forms but adapts meter and rhyme to express mood and thought as clearly and effectively as possible. Stanzas consist of seven, eight, nine, and ten lines containing a variety of metrical patterns.

An unusual arrangement of the eight-line stanza consists of alternate pentameter and dimeter lines.

> "This quiet Dust was Gentlemen and Ladies,
> And Lads and Girls."
> (248, lxxiv)

Another version gives the impression of breathless excitement by the use of the iambic foot with an occasional trochee to lend variety and to duplicate the effect of words spoken with such rapidity that the speaker is forced to stop for breath.

> "Going to him! Happy letter! Tell him--
> Tell him the page I didn't write;
> Tell him I only said the syntax,
> And left the verb and the pronoun out.
> Tell him just how the fingers hurried,
> Then how they waded, slow, slow, slow;
> And then you wished you had eyes in your pages,
> So you could see what moved them so."
> (139, xxiii)

Even in the longer stanzas Emily Dickinson preferred the short line, but in some instances a longer line and different meter suited her mood better. In "Safe in their alabaster chambers" (158, iv) the long line and the combination of dactyls and trochees give a dignity and stateliness that could not be obtained with the more frequently used iambic foot.

The metaphysical poets rebelled against the elaborate style and conventional poetic diction of their time; Emily Dickinson quietly ignored all suggestions that she adjust her thoughts to conventional molds. Commenting on her

reaction to the advice he gave, Colonel Higginson wrote to Mrs. Todd:

> "It would seem that at first I tried a little--a very little--to lead her in the direction of rules and traditions; but I fear it was only perfunctory . . . I called her attention to the fact that while she took pains to correct the spelling of a word, she was utterly careless of greater irregularities." [1]

Emily's reply to his suggestion was characteristic and evasive.

> "I had no monarch in my life, and cannot rule myself; and when I try to organize, my little force explodes and leaves me bare and charred.
>
> . . . .
>
> "You say I confess the little mistake, and omit the large. Because I can see orthography; but the ignorance out of sight is my preceptor's charge." [2]

Like the metaphysical poets she chose to express her thoughts in the simple, direct speech of daily life. This reproduction of the rhythm of conversational language was effected by the use of the iambic foot and of short monosyllabic words, both of which predominate in the poetry of Emily Dickinson.

In her statement of definition or of argument, she uses a straightforward, natural diction.

"The difference between despair
And fear, is like the one
Between the instant of a wreck,
And when the wreck has been."
(229, xxiv)

---

[1] Todd, op. cit., p. 277.

[2] Ibid.

Often she speaks in the simple, conversational, sometimes rambling tone which is characteristic of women indulging in casual talk.

"It might have been lonelier
Without the loneliness;
I'm so accustomed to my fate
Perhaps the other--peace--
Would interrupt the dark,
And crowd the little room--"
(428, lxxxviii)

The metaphysical poets, in spite of their elaborate conceits, also express themselves in simple, unadorned language, sometimes in homely vein, again more formally. Herbert uses plain, colloquial speech in which monosyllables predominate.

"Hither sometimes Sinne steals, and stains
The marbles neat and curious veins:
But all is cleansed when the marble weeps.
Sometimes Death, puffing at the doore,
Blows all the dust about the floore;
But while he thinks to spoil the room, he sweeps."
(G, 108)

Donne uses more formal language in "Goodfriday, 1613: Riding Westward" (G, 89).

"Let mans Soule be s Spheare, and then, in this,
The intelligence that moves, devotion is,
And as the other Spheares, by being growne
Subject to forraigne motions, lose their owne,
And being by others hurried every day,
Scarce in a yeare their naturall forme obey."
(G, 89)

Not only did the metaphysical poets imitate normal speech rhythms, they also permitted the thought to continue from one line to the next and from one stanza to the next as

may be noted in the quotations just given. Emily Dickinson likewise disregarded end-stopped lines if the expression of her thought could not be contained within the prescribed limits. In her earlier work there is more careful attention to these technicalities, but later she makes no attempt to smooth away irregularities if her thought is alive. Run-on lines occur frequently.

"Elysium is as far as to
The very nearest room--"
(128, iv)

In "Death is a supple suitor" the thought is continued from line to line and from stanza to stanza as well.

"It is a stealthy wooing,
Conducted first

By pallid innuendoes
And dim approach--"
(BM, 374)

In her efforts to express her thoughts as vividly as possible, Emily Dickinson frequently omitted connectives, auxiliaries, and other words usually considered essential. Because of this ellipsis her poetry sometimes seems obscure unless the reader takes the time to supply the missing words. Sometimes this is done for effect; at others it seems as if vibrant thought had to be crystallized before it could escape. In her characterization of death, ellipsis results in a reproduction of laconic speech.

"Nobody knew his father,
Never was a boy,

Hadn't any playmates
Or early history."
(260, cvi)

In "One need not be a chamber to be haunted" the omission of words adds to the suspense and excitement characteristic of ghost stories.

"Far safer, of a midnight meeting
External ghost,
Than an interior confronting
That whiter host."
(188, lxix)

To secure the effects necessary to make her verse live, Emily Dickinson varied the metrical pattern to produce the effect she desired. Some of these variations have been noted in other chapters. Usually she accomplished this by conventional methods: substitution of a trochee for an iamb, insertion of spondees or extra syllables, shortening or lengthening a line unexpectedly.

In contemplating the search for eternity as a game of hide and seek, she changes to more serious mood.

"But should the play
Prove piercing earnest,
Should the glee glaze
In death's stiff stare--"
(39, lxxxi)

The use of the spondees in the last two lines brings whimsical speculation to an abrupt stop as the mood changes to sober realization of the uncertainty of death. The slower tempo enforced by the change of meter emphasizes the gravity evoked by the thought and gives a contrast to the lighter

meter of the preceding lines.

The spondee is again used to focus attention on significant words in

"A death-blow is a life-blow to some."
(177, xlvi)

The pause necessitated by the succession of accented words serves to emphasize and to contrast the pair more effectively.

Occasionally a dactyl or an anapaest is inserted to convey mood or to give variety to the verse.

"Many a phrase has the English language,--
I have heard but one,
Low as the laughter of the cricket,
Loud as the thunder's tongue;

Murmuring like old Caspian choirs
When the tide's a'lull."
(422, lxxvii)

The repetition of the initial dactyl echoes the murmur of the low voices. The variation in the meter aids in conveying the breathless rapture of the lover. The lyrical outburst changes abruptly in the last stanza to a return to reality.

"Not for the sorrow done me,
But for the push of joy;
Say it again--Saxon!
Hush--only to me!"

The unexpected break in meter intensified by the rapid alternation of trochee and iamb duplicate the rhythm of broken exclamations and dramatically evoke the actual scene.

Miss Dickinson's skill in arranging the metrical pattern to secure desired effects can be seen in the tetrameter lines of "Dare you see a soul at white heat?" (17, xxxiii)

"Dare you see a soul at white heat?
   Then crouch within the door.
Red is the fire's common tint--"

The dramatic effect of the first line is emphasized by the rising inflection of the anapest and reaches its climax in spondaic white heat. The use of a trochee in the third line focuses attention on the color, the inversion of the sentence adding to the effect. In the following line the choice of words combined with the inclusion of an extra syllable have the dual effect of reproducing the motion of the flames and emphasizing the intense emotion:

"Its quivering substance plays."

The trochaic meter used in describing the journey to eternity conveys the excitement of the trip and suggests the rhythmic motion of a rapidly moving carriage. The change to iambic meter in the first line and the use of anapaests in the second give the effect of barely controlled impatience.

"Tie the strings to my life, my Lord!
   Then I am ready to go'
Just a look at the horses--
   Rapid! That will do!"
(208, cxviii)

The impression of monotony and quiet conveyed by the alternating tetrameter and trimeter lines in "'Twas comfort in her dying room" (249, lxxv) is broken sharply by the sudden change in meter.

"But wrong, the mere
That these could live,--
And This of ours must die!"

Intense emotion breaking through the regular meter is expressed by the shorter lines, the emphasis on *wrong* bringing the quiet recital to an abrupt stop.

In addition to experimenting with variations of conventional stanzaic and metrical patterns, the metaphysical poets also secured striking effects by the repetition of vowel sounds throughout a stanza or poem. One of the finest examples of this is pointed out by Mr. Grierson in one of Donne's religious poems.

> "O might those *sighs* and tears return again
> Into my breast and *eyes*, which *I* have spent,
> That *I* might in this holy discontent
> Mourn with some fruit, as *I* have mourned in vain;
> In *mine* *Idolat'ry* what showers of rain
> *Mine* *eyes* did waste? What griefs *my* heart did rent?
> That sufferance was *my* sin; now *I* repent
> Cause *I* did suffer *I* must suffer pain."
> (G, xxvii)

The echo and re-echo of vowels and consonants is noticeable in many of Emily Dickinson's poems. Miss Taggard gives an excellent analysis of the effect produced by the combination of vowel and consonant sounds in "I taste a liquor never brewed" (12, xx). This is particularly effective in the second stanza.

> "Inebriate of air am I,
> And debauchee of dew,
> Reeling, through endless summer days,
> From inns of molten blue."

Miss Taggard analyzes this stanza as follows:

> " . . . 'Inebriate of air am I' plays with the delicate *i* sound in the first word, repeats it in 'air' and then

> grounds it in the word 'I'. Line two is all *e* and *ew* sound, alliterated and emphasized by the *ee*'s run into 'reeling'. Then comes 'inns of moulten blue,' which would be only a phrase if the *i*'s of the stanza were not still in the ear and the *ou* and the *u* in 'moulten' and 'blue' did not come as a perfect conclusion, a sensuous resolution."[1]

In "Come slowly, Eden!" (136, xviii) the repetition of *r* and *s* echoes the hum of the bee.

> "Reaching late his flower,
> Round her chamber hums,
> Counts his nectars--enters,
> And is lost in balms!"

The echoing *o*'s and *s*'s add to the impression of vast space and silence in "There is a solitude of space" (229, xxv).

> "There is a solitude of space,
> A solitude of sea,
> A solitude of death, but these
> Society shall be,
>
> Compared with that profounder site,
> That polar privacy,
> A Soul admitted to Itself:
> Finite Infinity."

Another characteristic of Emily Dickinson which enraged the critics and caused her work to be condemned as rough and formless was her preference for partial rhyme, particularly assonance and suspended rhyme. Louis Untermeyer notes, however:

> " . . . It was not until the beginning of the 'middle period' that Emily Dickinson seems to have made up her

---

[1] Taggard, Genevieve, *The Life and Mind of Emily Dickinson*, fourth edition, (New York and London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), pp. 269-70.

mind to discontinue or, at least, partially to discard the orthodox hermonies."[1]

Martha Hale Shackford wrote:

> " . . . She was teased by sound echoes that were not always exact, yet were enough so as to be suggestive . . . I think E. D. cared a great deal for assonance--in the technical sense."[2]

An analysis of her rhymes reveals many instances of her use of assonance, some of which are as follows: green-dream, prone-load, sea-seems, time-height, drive-life, stripped-picked, light-pride.

Even more frequent than her use of assonance is that of suspended rhyme in which words having the same final consonant but different vowel sounds are paired. Some examples of this are weed-laid, friend-land, face-crease, alone-none, God-sad, cells-feels, discern-mine, gained-spade, and air-sure.

The first stanza of "Where thou art--that is Home" is an excellent example of this technique.

"Where Thou art--that is Home,
Cashmere or Calvary--the same,
Degree--or shame,
I scarce esteem location's name
So I may come."
(355, cxxxviii)

These variations from the regular chime to which nineteenth century ears were accustomed served a double purpose.

---

[1] Untermeyer, Louis, "A More Intimate Emily," The Saturday Review of Literature, 9:363, January 7, 1933.

[2] Bingham, op. cit., p. 187.

Often they were used to suggest a rhyme, tricking the ear by similarity in sound. At other times the shock produced by the unexpected suspension of the even flow of the lines focused attention upon an idea that otherwise might have been obscured. In the use of technique as well as in the development of thought Emily Dickinson realized that emphasis and dramatic effect were best obtained by contrast.

"It was a quiet way" (345, cxxii) contains several examples of suspended rhyme.

> "It was a quiet way
> He asked if I was *his*.
> I made no answer of the tongue
> But answer of the *eyes*.
>
> And then he bore me high
> Before this mortal *noise*,
> With swiftness as of chariots
> And distance as of *wheels*."

Eyes here serves a dual purpose. The *z* sound rhymes with *his*, but the sound of *i* is an echo of those running throughout the stanza and an anticipation of the next line.

> "No seasons were to us--
> It was not night nor *noon*,
> For sunrise stopped upon the place
> And fastened it in *dawn*."

Mechanics are forgotten in the sweep of intense emotion; the suggestion of rhyme contained in the final *z*'s and *n*'s supplies the illusion of perfect rhyme. *Dawn* effects a more definite conclusion because of its falling inflection than would an exact rhyme.

In "Crumbling is not an instant's act" (BM, 509) the

dissonance created by the change in the metrical pattern and in the lack of rhyme focuses attention upon the conclusion.

"Ruin is formal, devil's work,
Consecutive and slow--
Fail in an instant no man did,
Slipping is crash's law."

Instances of similar wrenching of rhyme and meter to produce effect are to be found in metaphysical poetry. Some examples of suspended rhyme are as follow:

"If yet I have not all thy love,
Deare, I shall never have it all,
I cannot breath one other sigh to move,
Nor can intreat one other teare to fall."
John Donne (G, 4)

"Out of my stock of naturall delights,
Augmented with thy gracious benefits."
George Herbert (G, 4)

"In all her outward parts Love's always seen;
But, oh, He never went within."
Abraham Cowley (G, 73)

More than any other metaphysical poet John Donne is noted for the dramatic impact of his verse obtained by ruthless changes in the metrical pattern. Instances have been given of the devices he used to obtain these effects in other chapters, but these quotations will show the irregularity of the metrical pattern characteristic of his work.

"At the round earths imagin'd corners, blow
Your trumpets, Angells, and arise, arise
From death."
(G, 86)

"This is my playes last scene, here heavens appoint
My pilgrimages last mile; and my race
Idly, yet quickly runne, hath this last pace--"
(G, 86)

The regular meter of the sonnet has been completely ignored in the effort to express as vividly as possible the passionate intensity of the poet.

In the desire to express the deep emotion felt by man in his spiritual and temporal life, the metaphysical poets permitted their thoughts to break through the conventional molds, shocking conservative minds by the roughness which marred their verse. These individual roughnesses, however, were forgotten in the intensity and powerful expression of the poem as a whole. This is true of the poetry of Emily Dickinson as well, for, like the metaphysical poets, she deliberately employed metrical and stylistic devices to jar the complacent mind into cognizance of the vital import of her words.

In some of her poems written apparently under stress of deep emotion, she breaks away from the metrical pattern entirely as in "Title divine is mine" (154, lvii) and "Renunciation" (362, cli), but the impact of intense emotion is such that failure to conform to technicalities is forgotten. Like her seventeenth century predecessors, she subordinated form to thought, and the result was that which she most ardently desired--verse that lived.

Conclusion

As the poetry of Emily Dickinson corresponds to that of the metaphysical poets in the expression of passionate intensity and the intellectual analysis of emotion, as it is similar in imagery and in stylistic devices, it is also comparable in the development of unique rhythmical patterns.

In her choice of stanzaic forms, Emily Dickinson selected those which the metaphysical poets had also found most suitable, the sonnet excepted. The ballad stanza, with its short line and iambic foot was most readily adapted to reproduce the inflection of simple, colloquial speech, and she, like the metaphysical poets, used it frequently. With Emily Dickinson, however, the ballad stanza, or variations of it, is used in preference to any other form while the earlier poets experimented extensively. Invariably, however, such changes as she makes in the form of this stanza contain shorter lines in order to express intense emotion more vividly. The use of iambic dimeter in certain of these arrangements is like that of George Herbert.

Although she uses the couplet very little, it is ordinarily written as a stanza, whereas the metaphysical poets write in heroic verse.

The tercet and various arrangements of the triplet were frequently used by the metaphysical poets, particularly in

the lighter love songs, since they were especially adapted to detailed description of a lady's charms. Emily Dickinson also found its short line and lilting rhythm applicable to her less intense poetry.

Since the sestet lent itself to a variety of arrangements, the metaphysical poets used it extensively. A number of Miss Dickinson's poems are written in this form, but usually the conventional rhyme scheme is followed.

Although she used other stanzas of varying lengths, they do not often conform to any particular type but are arranged to convey mood and thought as clearly and as effectively as possible.

Regardless of the metrical form, Emily Dickinson expressed her thoughts in simple, direct language. To catch the inflections of colloquial speech she preferred the iambic foot and short, sharp words, monosyllables predominating. In reproducing the rhythm of normal conversation, she permitted the thought to run on from line to line, and from stanza to stanza, as did the metaphysical poets.

Strict adherence to the metrical pattern results in monotony. To avoid this Emily Dickinson varied the metrical pattern by every device possible, yet the apparent irregularity of her verse was accomplished by orthodox methods. By substitution of a trochee for an iamb, lengthening or shortening a line unexpectedly, inserting a spondee or adding an

extra syllable, omitting another syllable, she obtains lyrical intensity and achieves dramatic effects that challenge and delight because of their originality and unexpectedness.

Another device characteristic of the metaphysical poets is also noticeable in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. To increase the harmonious effect of the rhythmical pattern and to act as a unifying element, a vowel sound, or a combination of vowel and consonant sounds, is so arranged that it echoes and re-echoes throughout the entire stanza or poem.

In her eagerness to crystallize thought as vividly as possible, Emily Dickinson completely disregarded conventional rhyme schemes. While the exact rhyme insisted upon by her contemporaries is present in her poetry, notably in the earlier attempts, assonance and suspended rhyme is used extensively, and rhyme is discarded completely if it hampers the flow of thought. Frequently there is only the suggestion of rhyme, but the suggestion is made so subtly that one is not conscious of its lack.

In other instances the rhyme is deliberately omitted to jar one into consciousness of some vital thought, the break in the pattern, as in the meter, provoking attention by its unexpectedness and by the discordance. Such deliberate disturbance of rhyme and metrical patterns are characteristic of metaphysical poetry.

Because of the disruption of the metrical pattern and

the unconventional use of rhyme, the poetry of Emily Dickinson sometimes has an external roughness, a roughness which often is intentional--and challenging. In the overwhelming intensity of emotion and the sensitive expression of thought external crudities are forgotten as the experimental infractions of conventional poetry of the metaphysical poets were submerged in the vitality and harmony of the whole.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters the poetry of Emily Dickinson has been compared with that of the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century from the point of view of content, style, and metrical form. In every respect it has proved to be strikingly similar.

Like the metaphysical poets Emily Dickinson was concerned with the problems of life and eternity, problems which have intrigued men from the beginning of time. The fascination which these questions held for her is evident in the numerous references made to them in all their many and varied aspects throughout her poetry.

Since her interest in these vital issues was intensely personal, as was that of the metaphysical poets, the same passionate intensity which characterized their work is present in hers also. The passionate intensity which permeates her poetry varies from the deeply emotional, intensely subjective poems written in the ecstasy of love or in the torment and anguish of renunciation to the more restrained but equally intense speculations on the mysteries of death and immortality. In the poems composed under the stress of strong emotion, intensity at times breaks through the metrical pattern, outward form forgotten in the necessity for gaining relief from over-

powering emotion through poetic expression. In the problems of death and eternity passionate intensity is subordinated to a more intellectual consideration, the emotional expression subjected to the intellectual restraint imposed by the imagery.

From her quiet corner Emily Dickinson observed man and nature and recorded her observations with a keen perspicuity and an intellectual imagination comparable to that of the metaphysical poets. Like them, too, she expressed her conclusions in terms of familiar objects and experiences; nothing was too humble or too trivial to be used in interpreting her reactions if it were suited to her purpose--clear-cut, brief, exact presentation of thought and emotion. In her analysis of emotion she extracted the essential elements and expressed them in terse, pithy language, devoid of superfluous detail, and yet having a dramatic impact obtained by the unexpectedness of her figures and the daring combinations of the tangible and the intangible, the momentous and the trivial, the finite and the infinite. Ideas tremendous in their implication were telescoped into a few terse lines with a keenness of perception and an ingenious choice of imagery that enhanced, rather than detracted from, the magnitude of the concept.

Sometimes these concise definitions were complete in themselves; at others they were expanded into detailed analyses of thought and emotion. Man's reaction to his problems were subjected to searching examination and the result record-

ed in compact, logical form marked by unusual ability to express the abstract in terms of the concrete. Emotion was analyzed from every angle, each phase subjected to searching scrutiny, and each conclusion stated impartially and often impersonally. In the apprehension of thought and emotion, Emily Dickinson's poetry is comparable to that of the metaphysical poets, but whereas they sometimes became involved in tortuous rhetoric or in erudite language, Emily Dickinson writes in the simple direct speech of the common people, compressing her thoughts into the most compact form possible. It was her wish to strip her poetry of all but essential elements. In her efforts to eliminate unnecessary terms, she sometimes seemed cryptic or obscure, but she did not indulge in the elaborate conceits and fancies with which the metaphysical poets experimented.

Emily Dickinson was concerned primarily with the mystery of death and immortality, but no phase of human thought or activity escaped her keen eye. In her analysis of the emotions and thoughts roused by contemplation of the infinite and by participation in the terrestrial, she has made a comprehensive outline of man's hopes and fears, recording her observations so honestly and impartially that it is difficult to determine her own reactions: for every affirmation of faith there is also a negation--or a doubt. Every mood and every variation is represented from intense passion to deep

anguish, from deep-rooted faith to skepticism and irony, from wonder to disillusionment, from resignation ro rebellion. Every phase of human thought and emotion held for her the same irresistible fascination that it had held for the metaphysical poets.

In examination of the style of Emily Dickinson's poetry it has been shown that many of the devices used by the metaphysical poets are also noticeable in her work. The most notable characteristic of her poetry is the use of metaphor, both in laconic, clear-cut definition and in the ingenious elaboration of an image. Another favorite device for expressing intangible and complex ideas is paradox. In the brevity and conciseness of this paradoxical presentation of ideas, her poetry is often epigrammatic in quality.

Her sense of the dramatic, noticeable in her use of paradox, is still more apparent in her personifications of abstract ideas. Frequently a dramatic quality is supplied by the abrupt, conversational tone of the introduction, and setting is suggested by the imagery in much the same manner as that of John Donne.

In the development of intellectual and argumentative thought, she employs similar devices to those found in metaphysical poetry: parallel structure, antithesis, analogy, development through negative statement. Frequently her skillful manipulation of these elements results in rhetoric as involved

and ingenious as that of the metaphysical poets, in certain instances having a turn of phrase of a decidedly seventeenth century flavor.

In one other respect her style resembles that of the metaphysical poets: the rapid accumulation of images, often rising to a dramatic climax. Sometimes this consists of a series of words succeeding one another in rapid sequence; at others, images are multiplied in swift succession.

As her stylistic devices are similar to those employed by the metaphysical poets, so her adaptation of meter and rhyme to secure the most striking effects also corresponds to theirs. Like them, she preferred the ballad stanza, or variations made up of shorter lines, since these were most suitable for expressing intense emotion or for reproducing the rhythms of colloquial speech. She also used the triplet and the sestet, and other forms as well when they suited her purpose, but she did not experiment with bizarre arrangements as did some of the metaphysical poets.

To simulate the inflections of simple, direct speech she found that monosyllables and iambic meter were most effective, and that by breaking the metrical pattern, using the devices mentioned in the preceding chapter, she could avoid monotony and secure variety.

In disregarding conventional requirements Emily Dickinson also discovered that the melodious quality of her verse

could be enhanced by the repetition of a vowel or consonant, permitting the sound to echo throughout the stanza or the entire poem.

In her rhyme schemes Miss Dickinson also ignored contemporary insistence on perfect rhyme and substituted assonance and suspended rhyme when they suited her purpose better--or used no rhyme at all. Sometimes rhyme was suggested by the choice of words or the echoes of the vowel sounds; sometimes the discordance was used to emphasize thought and to shock the reader into awareness of the significance of an idea.

In content, in style, and in form the poetry of Emily Dickinson is the expression of an intensely personal, though not profoundly philosophical, absorption in the mysteries of the universe and of man's place in the incomprehensible vastness of eternity. Out of these incessant speculations on the eternal "Why?" has emerged a body of poetry wholly New England in its essence but thoroughly metaphysical in its apprehension of the infinite.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Books Relative to Emily Dickinson

Aiken, Conrad, editor, *Selected Poems by Emily Dickinson*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1924. Pp. 5-22.

Bianchi, Martha Dickinson, *The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1924. 386pp.

_______, and Alfred Leete Hampson, editors, *Poems by Emily Dickinson*, tenth edition. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1946. 458 pp.

Bingham, Millicent Todd, *Ancestors' Brocades*, second edition. New York and London: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1945. 464 pp.
An account of the editing and publication of the poems of Emily Dickinson.

Pollitt, Josephine, *Emily Dickinson: The Human Background of Her Poetry*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1930. 350 pp.

Taggard, Genevieve, *The Life and Mind of Emily Dickinson*. New York and London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930. 378 pp.

Todd, Mabel Loomis, editor, *Letters of Emily Dickinson*, third edition. New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1931. 454 pp.

_______ and Millicent Todd Bingham, editors, *Bolts of Melody, New Poems of Emily Dickinson*, third edition. New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1945. 352 pp.

_______ and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, editors, *Poems by Emily Dickinson*. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1890. Pp. iii-vi.

Untermeyer, Louis, *Modern American Poetry*, sixth revised edition. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1942. Pp. 7-9, 77-83.

Whicher, George Frisbie, *This Was A Poet, A Critical Biography of Emily Dickinson*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939. 336 pp.

B. Books Relative to the Metaphysical Poets

Coffin, Robert P. Tristram, and Alexander W. Witherspoon, editors, *Seventeenth Century Prose and Poetry*, second edition. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946. Pp. 1-7, 8-10, and 111.

Dunn, Esther Cloudman, *The Literature of Shakespeare's England*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936. Pp. 158-63. A criticism of the poetry of John Donne.

Grierson, Herbert J. C., editor, *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century*, fourth edition. London: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1936. 244 pp.

LeGouis, Emile and Louis Cazamian, *A History of English Literature*, ninth revised edition. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947. Pp. 346-50, 559-88.

Thrall, William Flint and Addison Hubbard, *A Handbook to Literature With an Outline of Literary History English and American*, eighth edition. New York: The Odyssey Press, 1936. Pp. 251-3.

C. Periodical Articles

Abbott, Lawrence F., "Emily Dickinson," *The Outlook*, 140:211-13, June 10, 1925.

Aiken, Conrad, "Emily Dickinson," *The Dial*, 76:301-8, April, 1924.

Bloom, Margaret, "Emily Dickinson and Dr. Holland," *University of California Chronicle*, 35:96-103, January, 1933.

Briggs, Katherine, "Emily Dickinson: A New England Anchoress," *The Catholic World*, 120:344-54, December, 1924.

Dole, Nathan Haskell, "Mabel Loomis Todd," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 9:260, November 19, 1932.

Hartley, Marsden, "Emily Dickinson," *The Dial*, 65:95-97, August 15, 1918.

Higginson, Thomas Wentworth, "An Open Portfolio," *The Christian Union*, 42: 392-93, September 25, 1890.

Hillyer, Robert, "Emily Dickinson," *The Freeman*, 6:129-31, October, 1922.

Howells, William Dean, "The Strange Poems of Emily Dickinson," *Harper's Magazine*, 82:318-21, January, 1891.

James, Sister Mary, S. S. N. D., "Emily's Neighborhood," *The Catholic World*, 158:143-49, November, 1943.

Jenkins, MacGregor, "A Child's Recollections of Emily Dickinson," *The Christian Union*, 44:776-77, October 24, 1891.

Kurth, Paula, "Emily Dickinson In Her Lettere," *Thought, A Quarterly of Science and Letters*, 4:430-39, December, 1929.

Matthiesen, F. O., "Midsummer in the Mind," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 12:12, January 18, 1936.

Maynard, Theodore, "The Mystery of Emily Dickinson," *The Catholic World*, 134:70-81, October, 1931.

McLean, Sydney R., "Emily Dickinson," *Mount Holyoke Alumnae Quarterly*, 19:221-23, February, 1936.

Miles, Susan, "The Irregularities of Emily Dickinson," *The London Mercury*, 13:145-58, December, 1925.

Pattee, Fred Lewis, "Gentian Not Rose," *Sewanee Review*, 45:180-97, April-June, 1937.

Pohl, Frederick, J., "The Emily Dickinson Controversy," *Sewanee Review*, 41:467-82, October-December, 1933.

Root, E. Merrill, "Clothes vs. Girl," *The Measure*, 39:15-18, May, 1924.

Sapir, Edward, "Emily Dickinson, a Primitive, "*Poetry*, 26:97-105, May, 1925.

Schauffer, Henry Park, "The Second Series of Emily Dickinson's Poems," *Amherst Literary Monthly*, 6:175-82, November, 1891.

Sergeant, Elizabeth Shipley, "An Early Imagist," *The New Republic*, 4:52-54, August 14, 1915.

Smith, Lucy Humphrey, "The Mystery of Emily Dickinson's Life," *The Literary Digest*, "International Book Review," 2:587-88, July, 1924.

Spencer, Theodore, "Further Poems of Emily Dickinson," *The New England Quarterly*, 2:498-501, July, 1929.

Stoddard, Francis H., "Technique in Emily Dickinson's Poems," *The Critic*, 17:24-24, January 9, 1892.

Stunz, Arthur N., "Bolts of Melody," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 28:19, August 18, 1945. Letter from a contributor correcting authorship of Poem 232 in *Bolts of Melody*.

Taggard, Genevieve, "Emily Dickinson," *The Nation*, 119:376-78, October 8, 1924.

Tolles, Catherine, "The Fire and Dew of Emily Dickinson," *The Mount Holyoke*, 37:209-22, April, 1930. Discussion of the metaphysical aspects of Emily Dickinson's poetry.

Trueblood, Charles K., "Emily Dickinson," *The Dial*, 80:301-11, April, 1926.

Van Doorn, Willem, "How It Strikes A Contemporary," *English Studies* (Amsterdam), 8:132-35, October, 1926.

Van Doren, Mark, "Nerves Like Tombs," *The Nation*, 128:348-49, March 20, 1929.

Untermeyer, Louis, "A More Intimate Emily," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 9:363, January 7, 1933.

_______, "Colossal Substance," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 5:769-71, March 16, 1929.

_______, "Emily Dickinson," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 6:1169-71, July 5, 1930.

Wasson, Mildred, "Victory Comes Late to Emily Dickinson," *The Literary Digest* "International Book Review," 3:780-81, November, 1925.

Whicher, George Frisbie, "Emily Dickinson," *Amherst Graduates Quarterly*, 20:94-99, February, 1931.

_______, "Emily's Suitors," *The Forum*, 106: 162-66, August, 1946.

_______, "In Emily Dickinson's Garden," *The Atlantic Monthly*, 177:64-70, February, 1946.

D. Essays

Bradford, Gamaliel, "Emily Dickinson," *Portraits of American Women*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919. Pp. 228-57.

Brooks, Van Wyk, "Emily Dickinson," *New England: Indian Summer, 1865-1915*. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1940. Pp. 228-57.

Brown, Rollo Walter, "A Sublimated Puritan," *Lonely Americans*. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1929. Pp. 235-60.

Higginson, Thomas Wentworth, "Emily Dickinson," *Carlyle's Laugh and Other Surprises*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919. Pp. 247-83.

Johnson, Samuel, "From Abraham Cowley," (*Lives of the English Poets*), *The Great Critics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1939. Pp. 460-62.

Kreymborg, Alfred, "The Tippler Leaning Against the Sun," *Our Singing Strength*. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1929. Pp. 193-205.

E. Parts of Series

Whiting, B. J., et al., editors, *The College Survey of English Literature*. Vol. II, pp. 563-69, 587-91, 610-19, 693-96. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946. Discussion of metaphysical poetry.

F. Encyclopedia Articles

Turner, William, "Metaphysics," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, special edition, X, 226-33.

EFFICIENCY BOND
RAG CONTENT
A.P. & R. Co.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
1 1719 02551 5323

PRESS BINDER
25057 EMB.

MADE BY
PRODUCTS, INC.
AND CITY, N.Y., U.S.A.